

THE INAUGURAL THRONE-ROOM VISION OF THE BOOK
OF REVELATION : ITS BACKGROUND, CONTENT AND
CONTEXT

Dave Murray Rankin

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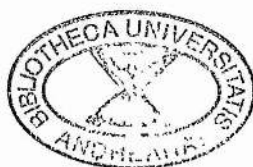
The Inaugural Throne-room Vision of the Book of Revelation

Its background, content, and context

Dave Murray Rankin

Ph.D. (New Testament)

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To
my wife and fellow-sojourner,
Marcia
Proverbs 31:29 [NRSV]

Abstract:

Our mandate in this thesis is in essence to tackle and complete two inter-linked, tripartite tasks. Firstly, the sources and traditions of the inaugural throne-vision of the Apocalypse (Rev. 4-5) will be considered; its contents and omissions will be closely examined; and its progressive context will be traced throughout the book with special attention being given to its relationship with the final eschatological vision (Rev. 21-22).

Secondly, in parallel and in conjunction with these first three objectives, there is a further threefold consideration which stems from this primary analysis. This secondary concern will deal with the doctrine of God, the Christology of the Lamb, and the eschatological hope of the Christian.

These tasks will serve to firmly anchor Revelation in its Jewish traditional background, and John's methods employed in handling these sources will be described. The comparison of the inaugural and the final throne-room visions will be made, and also their resemblance with and difference from other throne-room scenes will be highlighted. Finally John's theological messages, that develop from this, will be detailed.

I, Dave Murray Rankin, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 88,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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I. Introduction.

A. Introduction to Thesis.

In any study of Revelation, one discovers very quickly that it is an ambivalent endeavour. Thus, simultaneously, the book is a deep mine with rich seams to be gleaned, but it is also a minefield with disasters to be avoided. So, as we venture forth on this study, we do so with the combined feeling of trepidation tempered with optimistic anticipation. To introduce the thesis more fully, we will flesh out our earlier skeletal abstract.

We will seek to insert Revelation 4 and 5 into the trajectory of Jewish and Christian heavenly throne scenes. These scenes occur over a long time-frame in a wide range of writings and they are listed under the title of 'Corpus of Consulted Literature.' These works include not only those found in the contemporary milieu of Revelation, but also those found in much earlier and much later sources.

Before the throne-vision is discussed in particular, we will consider some general preliminary issues on the Apocalypse itself. These will include its authorship, date, genre, literary unity, and purpose. Next, a number of issues relevant to the throne-vision itself will be addressed. These will be arranged under the following headings: the Use of the Old Testament; Temple and Tabernacle Influence; Hymnic Material; the Rebuttal of a Graeco-Roman Influence; Introduction to Revelation 4 and 5; and the Ascent of the Seer.

An in-depth study will then be made of the Inaugural Throne Vision, as we consider the Worship of the Heavenly Sovereign, and the Investiture and Worship of the Lamb. The elements which John has chosen to employ will be investigated as will those which he has opted to omit under the title of Motifs and Features Absent from the Inaugural Vision. The Progression towards the Final Throne Vision of Revelation 21-22 (especially Rev. 22:1-5) will be considered. Then this Final Vision will be compared with the Inaugural Vision.

As cog drives cog, and gear drives gear to finally produce a mechanical result, so our study outlined thus far will be responsible for yielding another three-part sequence of considerations. To continue the engineering analogy, both of these tripartite groups will be 'synchro-meshed' and at times even intertwined throughout the course of our thesis. This second group will constitute a theological examination. It will involve the doctrine of God where we will investigate the shift from transcendence¹ to the immanence of God,² through chapter 4, the whole of the inaugural vision, and the book of Revelation itself. The sacrificial-victory of the Lamb, his commissioning, investiture, and association with the throne will be explored. Finally, we shall review how this impacts the righteous and their journey to the celestial garden city.³

¹ In our studies the term 'transcendence' will be employed as a comprehensive concept which incorporates a number of different characteristics. In his discussion on the transcendence of God in the *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (OTP1, pg. xxxi), Charlesworth concludes, after some caveats, that 'the early Jews tended to emphasize God's holiness, majesty, gloriousness, and sovereignty; he was transcendent.' Thus by this statement he implies that the attributes of holiness, majesty, gloriousness, and sovereignty are included in the notion of transcendence. This will be our starting point. Our definition incorporates not only moral aspects but also the metaphysical - the otherness of God [See Summerell (1998) for various essays covering the historical development of and the current thinking on this motif]. Our inclusive definition additionally embraces the sense of spatial distance and remoteness because of the various strata between earth and the heavenly throne-room, and also because of the absolute disparity between these two loci.

² Following on from note 1, the term 'immanence' is used here, not in the sense of the 'indwelling', but rather as a 'dwelling with,' - the notion of 'tabernacular presence' that indicates a nearness of God and thus a 'softening' of his transcendence.

³ It should be noted that because of the nature of the focus of our study on the heavenly realm, and the fact that the locale of the experiencing of judgment and punishment is always outside this environment, little will be said about this topic. This is not to diminish John's emphasis on it, but it is out-with the range of our present study.

B. General Comments on the Apocalypse.

1. Introduction.

In the following sections, we will sketch out briefly our position taken on various introductory considerations to the book of Revelation. The topics addressed are as follows: the author of the book, the date of composition, its literary genre, the unity of the book, and the purpose for which it was written. We will not be entering into detailed discussions on these subjects. Therefore after a brief overview of the various positions is given, we will present our basic propositions. An exhaustive treatment of the many detailed arguments that are involved is out-with the scope of this present work. Some of the subjects still continue to muster much interest with both sides of an argument having some very plausible features while still harbouring other incongruent aspects. In fact, some of the topics, although providing fertile ground for academic debate, will probably always remained unsolved. Furthermore, for our present study the only ones having the most significant impact are those of the unity of the book, its genre and most importantly its purpose.

2. Authorship.

The prologue of Revelation describes the one who penned this book as John, a servant of Jesus Christ, who was a prophet exiled on the isle of Patmos⁴ (Rev.1:1,3,9). The name 'John' was a common one in the early church, and his identity has three likely possibilities⁵ - John the apostle,⁶ another John (sometimes referred to as John the Elder),⁷ and someone else using "John" as a pseudonym.^{8 9}

We concur with J. P. M. Sweet¹⁰ who proposes that 'it seems wisest to admit that we cannot know more about the author than his book tells us; indeed he himself claims only to be a reporter - it is the message that matters (Rev. 22:6-9,18-20).' Additionally, for our discussion the unambiguous identification of the author is not a critical factor. However the preceding study will consider Revelation as a unified work composed by a single author rather than a series of writers or redactors,¹¹ and the consensus of modern scholarship would probably accept this assumption.¹² From the internal evidence it is clear that he was a Christian Jew who had a thorough knowledge and comprehension of the Jewish Scriptures in the original Hebrew language and also in their Greek and perhaps even Aramaic translations.¹³

⁴ For the background of Patmos, see Hemer (1986) [pp. 27-30] who highlights John's intimate knowledge of his audience - the seven churches in Asia Minor - to which he writes.

⁵ So, Beale (1999) pg. 34. See also Sweet (1979) pp. 36-38.

⁶ This was the opinion of Irenaeus, Melito of Sardis, and Justin Martyr. Also Ratton (1912) pp. 1-21 and more recently see Mounce (1977) pp. 25-31; Whale (1987) pp. 289-295; Smalley (1987) pp. 549-571. Cf. Mussies (1971) and (1980) pp. 167-177.

⁷ The belief of Dionysius of Alexandria based on an early misunderstanding. Sweet (1979) [pg. 38] suggests this is the least problematic solution. See also Deeks (1997) pp. 324-9.

⁸ This would appear to be the least feasible. See Charles (1920) 1 pp. xxxvii-xxxix.

⁹ It should be noted that Ford (1975) [pp. 28-37, 50-56] argues for John the Baptist as the author, but this position has received little support.

¹⁰ Sweet (1979) pg. 38.

¹¹ Aune (1997) [pg lvi] suggests that the final author-editor was an unidentifiable figure named 'John', a Palestinian Jewish immigrant to the Roman province of Asia.

¹² See the subsequent discussion on the unity of the book.

¹³ The Apocalypse's relationship to the Targums is discussed in McNamara (1966) pp. 97-125, 189-237 and McNamara (1972) pp. 142-159 (esp. pp. 118, 155-6).

3. Date.

There are two main loci proposed for the dating of Revelation:¹⁴

a) Towards the end of the 1st cent. or the beginning of the second, probably around 90-95 AD. This is in line with the earliest traditions that suggest that it was written towards the end of emperor Domitian's reign (81-96 AD).¹⁵

b) Around 69 AD.

In the year after Nero's suicide in 68 AD, there followed a rapid succession of three emperors (Galba, Otho, and Vitellius).¹⁶ Thus it was from this time of upheaval, known as the year of four emperors, that R. B. Moberly¹⁷ suggests the Apocalypse (or the main vision) was conceived. J.A.T. Robinson¹⁸ also, on the basis of internal evidence, proposes an early date. However, J.P.M. Sweet¹⁹ has argued convincingly against Robinson's main suggestions which he classifies as the *historical* argument (pp. 22-24)²⁰ and the *psychological* argument (pp. 24-27).²¹

On reflection, either position is not devoid of problems. There are inevitable difficulties with both of them as there are no completely reliable indications of the date. However, because the weight of evidence and the opinion of most commentators appear to favour the later date, we shall reckon on a date around 95 AD.

4. Genre.

a) Introduction.

The genre of the book of Revelation is another issue on which scholarly opinion is divided. Much has been written on this topic and more, most probably, will. However, it is not our intention to delve into the many different arguments and their various grounds for defence, but rather just to outline, quickly, our position on this subject. A few initial non-controversial points can be made. Revelation is a real circular letter. Although it is prefixed by a seven-part cover-letter addressed to the seven churches²² (Rev. 2:1-3:22), this is obviously integrally linked to the whole book which itself is an ecumenical document. Its contents are intended to be read frequently before a public audience²³ who, in turn, are expected to respond to it (Rev. 1:3).²⁴

¹⁴ For recent discussion, see Beale (1999) pp. 4-27; Aune (1997) pp. lvi-lxx.

¹⁵ This stems from a remark by Irenaeus (c.180 AD) alluding to time 'at the close of Domitian's reign.' (*Adv. Haer.* 5.30.3).

¹⁶ Bell (1979) also plumps for an early date. He cites the comments on this period by the early second century Roman historians, Tacitus, Suetonius and Plutarch, as part of his argument.

¹⁷ Moberly (1992) pp. 376-393.

¹⁸ Robinson (1976).

¹⁹ Sweet (1979) pp. 21-27.

²⁰ This is based on the events of Jerusalem and Rome (64-70 AD) linked to Revelation chapters 11, 17, 18.

²¹ He argues that the passages about Babylon being drunk with the blood of Jesus' witnesses can only be understood in the light of the current intensity of Nero's persecution.

²² See Hemer (1986) [pp. 15-20] for a discussion on the place of the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation.

²³ See Charlesworth (1987) pg. 25. Boman (1962) [pg. 1] suggests that the 'Hebrews experienced the world primarily through listening, the Greeks through seeing.' While, Sweet, (1979) [pg. 14] proposes, 'Broadly speaking, Hebrew imagery appealed to the ear rather than to the eye and created a dynamic psychological impression without necessarily evoking a picture in the mind.'

²⁴ However, because of its intricate and erudite character, the book was also intended to be studied and expounded.

b) *Apocalypse-Prophecy.*

In the opening verses of his book, John refers to his work both as an apocalypse [ἀποκάλυψις] and as a prophecy [προφητεία].²⁵ This dual designation in some ways reflects the tension and ensuing polarisation which occurs when the genre of Revelation is discussed. In recent years various attempts have been made to define and refine the term 'apocalypse'.²⁶ However some would suggest that the Apocalypse is ill-named, because it is *not* an apocalyptic book,²⁷ while others would argue that Revelation is an indigenously Jewish apocalypse which has been merely 'christianised'.²⁸ At the other extreme, it is viewed as Christian prophecy in continuity with classical Old Testament prophecy. This position has been taken by D. Hill²⁹ and more recently by M. D. Mazzaferri.³⁰ 'His case for Revelation's continuity with OT prophecy is excellent, but unfortunately his account of Jewish apocalyptic is a caricature.'³¹

As we leave this topic of genre, a quotation and a few separate comments must suffice. 'Every genre...has multiple distinguishing traits, which however are not all shared by each exemplar. If literature is a genre, the idea of defining it is misconceived. For... the character of genres is that they change. Only variations or modifications of convention have literary significance.'³² The seer, himself would never have made a distinction between apocalyptic and prophecy. Thus, in part, the resolution to the genre debate is not so much a matter of essence but rather one of nuance. It is also accurate to suggest that Revelation fosters a generic relationship with Jewish apocalypses while displaying a clear continuity with Old Testament prophecy.³³ As we shall ascertain later, John is extremely well-versed in the Old Testament scriptures (as he assumes his audience also to be), and his constant allusions to them, particularly in the prophetic material, can be traced in some detail. However this is not the case with his relationship to other Jewish literature, particularly apocalypses, and probably all that can be said with confidence here is that he shares in the various traditions, but we cannot isolate exact sources. Thus, it would be true to say that John has a dependence on apocalyptic traditions, but is independent from individual apocalypses.

Finally, on one level, it is not vitally important for us to take a definitive position on which side of the divide (if there actually is such a divide) to stand, because the *Gattung* of the 'throne-vision' is no respecter of genre. However, and notwithstanding what has already been said, we would suggest that the scales are tipped in favour of the prophetic rather than the apocalyptic.

²⁵ Cf. also Rev 1:19; 4:1-2; 19:10; 22:6-7,10,18,19. Beale (1999) [pg. 36] suggests that 'it is probable that John should be socially identified with a group of early Christian itinerant prophets.' See, Bauckham (1993A) pp. 2-5.

²⁶ The most important recent contribution in this field is the definition proposed by Collins (1979) [pg. 9] - see Charlesworth (1987) [pp. 22-24] for a discussion of it. His definition has been expanded by Hellholm (1986) and by Aune (1986). This amendment - Yarbrow Collins (1986) [pg. 7]; Collins (1991) [pg. 19] - states that an apocalypse is 'intended to interpret present earthly circumstances in the light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority.' For an overview of the attempts to define 'apocalypse', see Webb (1990) pp. 115-126. See, Sappington (1994) [pp. 83-123] for a recent study on the importance of 'function' in defining apocalyptic literature.

²⁷ Kallas (1967) pg. 69. See Jones (1969) [pp. 325-327] for the importance of pseudonymity for this view.

However, Collins (1977) [pp. 329-43] counters that the lack of this feature is merely superficial to the argument.

²⁸ A more common view with past scholars, but more recently, see Ford (1975) pg. 4. See Caird (1966) pp. 10-11; Bauckham (1993) pp. 38-91.

²⁹ Hill (1971-1972); See Schlüssler Fiorenza (1980) for an evaluation of his position.

³⁰ Mazzaferri (1989). See particularly chapter 10, 'The case for Rev as Classical Prophecy' pp. 259-383.

³¹ Bauckham (1998) pg. 269 nt. 2.

³² A. Fowler, *Kinds of literature: An introduction to the theory of genres and modes*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982. [pg. 18] quoted by Vorster (1988) pg. 103.

³³ See Bauckham (1993A) pg. 5ff.

5. The Literary Unity of the Book.

Since the end of the last century there have been various redactional analyses and source-critical analyses theories of the Apocalypse with varying degrees of agreement.³⁴ Most recently, in this vein, D. E. Aune has proposed his 'diachronic hypothesis of the composition of Revelation'³⁵ that consists of a three stage composition with two editions.³⁶ A recent commentator has suggested that 'Aune's theory of composition appears to suffer most of the weaknesses of earlier source theories - inconsistency; circularity and the failure to engage with literary questions.'³⁷ From the other main perspective, R. J. Bauckham confidently states 'The more Revelation is studied, the more clear it becomes that it is not simply a literary unity, but actually one of the most unified works in the New Testament. The evidence discussed in this chapter should be sufficient to refute theories which divide the book into disparate sources.'³⁸ The position taken by this study will be to approach the book from this viewpoint i.e. that of it being a coherent and comprehensive unified work,³⁹ literarily and ideologically. This would have been the approach of its author - 'John's concern was to bind it together.'⁴⁰ J. A. Montgomery is correct when he describes John as 'a genius who has produced one of the most remarkable compositions in all literature.'⁴¹

6. Purpose.

If the position for the unity of the book is accepted, then Revelation was initially composed for particular groups of people who had specific but varied needs. Thus in Rev. 1:11 John is commanded by the risen Christ to 'write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches.' Then in Rev. 22:16 we are reminded again that it is a 'testimony for the churches.' This comes with the sevenfold commendation, 'Let *anyone* who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.'⁴² This refrain would suggest that the contents of his book were to be applicable to all churches and their members.

John sees himself as a prophet on two fronts. Firstly, he is 'forth-telling' into his contemporary situation. Secondly, he is 'fore-telling' as he progresses throughout his book to the final eschatological vision. Thus, he is dealing on these two levels: he is speaking into his current circumstances, and he is also announcing, in anticipation, a yet future day.

The messages to the churches reveal that the Lord has words of praise for some but also warnings of reproach for others. Thus as a prophet proclaiming his message to his present audience, John has again a bi-functional task. He is a preacher and he is a pastor. On the one hand, there are those among the churches who have been too involved with the secular, pagan society, while others have been overindulgent. There has been moral and spiritual deterioration by some. To these there is the call to repent. On the other hand there are those who are suffering and oppressed. They need a message of consolation and reassurance to strengthen them. To all the saints he gives the rallying call for a radical commitment and a dedicated

³⁴ See Mazzaferri (1989) [pp. 8-32] for an analysis of various hypotheses which he concludes hold little water. He comments, 'without a single exception good reason is readily at hand to reject each in turn.' [pg. 32]. See, also more recently, Aune, (1997) [pp. cx-cxvii] for the history and development of such theories. It is interesting to note that Ford (1975) (one of the more recent proposers of this position) has lately completely changed her prior assessment of sources and now considers Revelation primarily as a unity.

³⁵ *ibid.* pp. cxx-cxxxiv.

³⁶ This follows on from the suggested theory of two editions proposed by Prigent (1988) pp. 371-73. See, Aune (1997) pp. cxx - cxxxiv.

³⁷ So, I. Paul in BSB Issue 14, Dec 1999.

³⁸ Bauckham (1993) pg. 1 nt. 1.

³⁹ See Bauckham (1993) especially chapter 1 pp. 1-37 where he develops a detailed investigation into the structure and composition of Revelation. Also, Mazzaferri (1989) pp. 330-374; Thompson (1990) pp. 37-91; Schüssler Fiorenza (1977) pp. 344-366; Charlesworth (1987) pp. 24-25; Sweet (1979) pp. 35-36; Mussies (1971) pg. 351.

⁴⁰ Barr (1984) pg. 43.

⁴¹ Montgomery (1926) pg. 80.

⁴² Rev. 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13, 22.

devotion to Christ and his cause. Although the present seems bleak, even desolate, God is still seated on his throne. His plans will not be thwarted and if the saints will persevere they can look forward to a triumphant future. Thus the message of Revelation is an extremely practical one. It is also a very positive one because each of the seven letters to the churches ends with a glorious promise to all who do conquer.

It cannot be emphasised enough that the purpose of this book was initially to direct its message to separate churches which had various needs. These people would most probably have come from a large cross-section of society. As such there would have been a wide range of worldviews, attitudes, and abilities. Thus it is essential for us in the first instance to approach the book through the eyes and ears of these first century Christians, as we attempt to discover the impact on his flock that John would have intended.

7. A Few Concluding Remarks.

To draw the threads of this introduction together, we will assume that the author of this book was a Jewish Christian. Although his precise identity is uncertain, his audience certainly would have known him, as he wrote under the authority of simply the very common name, John. The date of writing is much discussed, but we would favour the later date during the reign of Domitian in 95 AD. We consider it to be a vision-driven literary work, that has affiliations with the apocalyptic and the prophetic genre, with the emphasis on the latter. It is very much a literary unity and essentially the product of one author. Finally his purpose for writing - which must be constantly kept in mind as we study his book - was to address the various situations that were prevalent in the seven churches of Asia. It was a message of warning, but more importantly words of encouragement directed to the seven churches that represented a series of examples of the fledgling Christian faith in action.

C. Corpus of Literature Consulted.

1. Introduction.

The ubiquity of the throne-room scene⁴³ results in it cropping up in a wide range of genres and provenances. It can be discovered nestling within the pages of legal, historical, sapiential, dramatic, prophetic, poetical, liturgical, apocalyptic and mystical works. For our purposes, the material that will be considered is to be found in the collections of literature which include among others: the Old and New Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Old and New Testament Pseudepigrapha, the Gnostic works, the Rabbinic and Mystical writings, and other later Jewish and Christian material. Apart from this grouping of material,⁴⁴ our other main division of material will, of course, be a chronological one. Thus the distinction will be made between those writings which were written before and roughly contemporary with the Book of Revelation, and therefore could have had an influence on it, and secondly those which are clearly written after it which, not only could have been affected by Revelation, but also could reflect continuing traditions found in John's writings.

We will not omit from our studies works which on the surface appear to be much later. This is because, firstly, documents or parts of them are particularly difficult to date. This is especially true where redactors have used and adapted material which may well have had much earlier origins. Secondly, 'because the whole tradition of Jewish and Christian apocalypses, down to the late middle ages, retains very important elements of continuity with the apocalypses of the

⁴³ Although there is a difference between throne-vision *reports* based on a visionary experience, and heavenly throne-room *descriptions*, both share the same imagery and will be treated as being correspondent.

⁴⁴ We are using these groupings of material in this section for convenience, because at times this division of material can be quite arbitrary. Thus as we will see, there are certainly Christian and 'Christianised' works and a *hekhalot* text to be found in the *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. There is Gnostic material in the *New Testament Pseudepigrapha*, and Jewish and Christian influence within the Gnostic tractates.

Second Temple period. Studying the tradition as a whole can sometimes illuminate the earlier apocalypses.⁴⁵

As we continue into the thesis, our main purpose will be to inquire into the various ways in which these works assist our understanding of the inaugural throne-vision in Revelation (Rev. 4&5) and its subsequent developing scenes throughout the whole book which culminate with the final throne-room scene of Rev. 22. However for just now it will suffice to simply list the works - found within this widely variant corpus - that are pertinent to our studies with their translations and sources. Those writings which are highlighted in **bold print** contain throne-visions of greater importance. These passages are afforded a place in the Appendix where a brief examination of them is given.

2. List of Consulted Works.

a. *Old Testament.*⁴⁶

This was, of course, the most important body of literature for John and especially the prophetic writings. However he employed the whole domain of this canon of Jewish sacred texts. In fact, Revelation can be seen as 'a Christian re-reading of the whole Jewish scriptural heritage, from the stories of the Beginning to the visions of the End.'⁴⁷ We will examine more fully his actual use of the Old Testament in a later section. However, the main throne-scenes to which reference will be made, are listed chronologically⁴⁸ as follows: i) **The vision of Moses and his companions** (Exod. 24:9-11); ii) **Micaiah's vision** (1Kgs. 22:19-23; cf. 2Chron.18:18-22); iii) **Job's throne-room scenes** (Job 1:6-12 & 2:1-6);⁴⁹ iv) **Isaiah's vision** (Isa. 6); v) **Ezekiel's visions** (Ezek. 1 & 10); vi) **Daniel's vision** (Dan. 7).

We are well aware of the long and complex history of oral and literary transmission of some of these chosen passages, and that also within these texts there are many compositional problems which have produced a never-ending divergence of opinion. However, discussion of sources will only be touched on incidentally, and for the purpose of this study we see no real need to decide whether or not a passage was composite,⁵⁰ or had multiple authors, editors and redactors. The reason for this approach is because the pre-history of the text (or even the whole book)

⁴⁵ Bauckham (1998) pg.2. For a demonstration of this point worked out in the example of 'Blood and horses (Revelation 14:20b)', see Bauckham (1993) pp. 40-48.

⁴⁶ Unless otherwise stated, our quotations of both the Old and New Testaments, and the Apocrypha, will be from the *New Revised Standard Version* Collins Publishers, London. As well as the Hebrew Bible, we will also make use of the targummic and septuagintal translations where appropriate.

⁴⁷ Sweet (1979) pg. 162.

⁴⁸ This sequence is probably in chronological order (see next note) and when the texts are under discussion at various stages, this order will be taken into consideration to observe if there are any possible developments of themes and complexity within the material. However their development within the Old Testament is seen as secondary to their actual relationship to the visions of Revelation, and how they were taken up and used by its author. So, as we examine texts, we will always be focused on our main thesis which is the contextualizing of Revelation 4 and 5 within its Jewish traditional background. We will also not be overly interested in the dependence of one particular text on another (although obviously if it is important in the development of a specific issue, it will be given due consideration) as the writer of the Apocalypse would have had at hand all these texts, free from their interdependency.

⁴⁹ The Book of Job, or more specifically, the prologue, is very difficult to date, as the various suggestions cover a large period of time. It has been placed in this position as it best fits the overall progression of throne-visions when topics like the transcendence of YHWH, the worship of God, judgment, and the development of, and within, the heavenly court and council are taken into account.

⁵⁰ There is often a great polarisation of views about the unity, or composition of a particular book. For example, Halperin (1988) [pg. 39] in his comments about commentaries on Ezekiel cites, 'Zimmerli (1969) boldly dissects the alleged strata of the book and tries to explain the significance of secondary as well as original materials; while Greenberg (1983) [chapters 1-20 only] sees the Book of Ezekiel as a skilfully crafted composition which may derive, in its entirety, from Ezekiel himself.' Halperin, takes Greenberg's approach, in *Seeking Ezekiel: text and psychology*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1993.

would have been of no importance to John or to the authors of contemporary and later apocalypses and mystical material. John would have viewed and procured his meaning from a specific passage in its final stage of composition. He would have used his sources uncritically. However the background of various items will be expanded if they have any significant bearing on the study of the throne-visions within the book of Revelation.

b. Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.

For most of the works in this section we will be referring to the various translations found in J. H. Charlesworth ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2 vols. (London: Darton, Logman, and Todd, 1983, 1985).⁵¹ This is a very comprehensive collection which does, as we have already noted, include some Christian and mystical material.

Among the apocalyptic literature and related works, to which reference will be made, are as follows: **1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch**; **2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch**; **3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch**;⁵² the **Apocalypse of Zephaniah**;⁵³ the **Fourth Book of Ezra**; the **Greek Apocalypse of Ezra**;⁵⁴ **Vision of Ezra**;⁵⁵ **Questions of Ezra**;⁵⁶ the **Apocalypse of Sedrach**;⁵⁷ **2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch**; **3 (Greek Apocalypse of) Baruch**; **the Apocalypse of Abraham**; and the **Apocalypse of Elijah**.

The following testaments will be consulted: **the Testament of Levi**; the **Testament of Job**; the **Testament of Adam**⁵⁸ and the **Testaments of the Three Patriarchs**:⁵⁹ **Abraham**⁶⁰ **Isaac**⁶¹ and **Jacob**.

From the group of documents considered as expansions of the Old Testament and various legends, the following will be taken into account: the **Ascension of Isaiah**; the **Life of Adam and Eve**; the **Lives of the Prophets**; the **Ladder of Jacob** and **4 Baruch**.

Finally in this section the Judeo-Hellenistic work from the second century BC, **Ezekiel the Tragedian** is of importance.

⁵¹ The main exceptions to this are Black (1985) for 1 Enoch, and Hollander-de Jonge (1985) for the Testament of Levi. For a review of these two volumes see Bauckham (1986) pp. 97-117 and Bauckham (1987) pp. 147-152.

⁵² This is clearly a much later *Hekhalot* tractate.

⁵³ It is still debated whether this work was originally Jewish [Wintermute (1983)] or Christian [Diedner (1979)]. Its date of writing is uncertain, although it is possible that it originated between first century BC and first century AD. Himmelfarb (1983) [ch.5] in her discussion of Jewish and Christian tours of hell suggests a feasibly early date. It contains the characteristic heavenly journey during which the seer witnesses the judgment and punishment of the wicked and the vindication of the righteous.

⁵⁴ This is a later Christian work which contains mainly visions of judgments and punishments in heaven.

⁵⁵ This is a thoroughly Christian pseudepigraphon which has been dated anywhere between 4th - 7th cent. AD.

⁵⁶ The date of composition of this Christian work seems to be late. Stone, *OTP* I [pp. 591-595] who provides translations of Recension A and B, suggests that the date, provenance, and original language (whether Armenian or otherwise) are unknown. However it appears to preserve some early Jewish traditional material.

⁵⁷ This work which is associated with the apocalypses of the Ezra cycle, consists of much earlier material. Stone (1984) [pg. 178] describes it as 'a late Christian farrago of Jewish traditions' in which the author 'borrows directly from Job, Paul, John, the Testament of Abraham, the Apocalypse of Ezra, 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra.'

⁵⁸ The Testament of Adam has three sections: a) Horarium - the hours of day and night. b) Prophecy. c) Hierarchy - a list of nine orders of heavenly beings and their functions. The original language - Greek, Hebrew or Syriac - is debated. Parts of this work exist in various versions - Greek, Arabic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, and Syriac (three recensions) which is the basis of Robinson's translation (1982) and (1983) *OTP* I pp. 989-93. See Stone (1996) [pp. 167-173] for the Armenian version and translation of the Horarium.

⁵⁹ They appear to be developments of an earlier Jewish work written in Greek of the first century. The Testaments of Isaac and Jacob are derived from the Testament of Abraham. They deal with the death of the patriarch, his heavenly journey and his view of judgement.

⁶⁰ It has survived in both a short and a long recension.

⁶¹ It is extant in two Coptic versions (Sahidic and Bohairic), in Arabic and Ethiopic. Himmelfarb (1983) [pp. 26-28] has argued that this Testament was the work of Egyptian monks.

c. *Dead Sea Scrolls.*

From this wide selection of material, our main interests in this section are firstly the three liturgical works: **the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice** 4Q400-407 (especially the songs for the seventh and the twelfth Sabbaths); **4QBerakhot^a 4Q286**; the Self Glorification Hymn, and secondly, the abridged version of part of Ezekiel's vision (Ezek. 1), **Second Ezekiel** (or Pseudo-Ezekiel) 4Q385. We will be referring to the following:

- i) F. Gracia Martínez *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*. Leiden/New York/Cologne: E. J. Brill, 1994.
- ii) G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. London: Penguin Press, 1997.
- iii) M. Wise, M. Abegg, Jr. & E. Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls. A New Translation*. London: HarperCollins, 1996.
- iv) J. H. Charlesworth, and C. A. Newsom eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations*. Vol. 4B *Angelic Liturgy: Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.

d. *Gnostic Writings.*

Our main sources for this selection of works comes from:

- i) J. M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977.
- ii) B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1987.⁶²
- iii) The relevant volumes found in 'The Coptic Gnostic Library' which includes the series of the Nag Hammadi Studies and the Nag Hammadi and Manichean Studies.

Our main interest within these writings will be those which include:

- i) Ascents:⁶³ *Allogenes*; *Marsanes*; *Melchizedek*; *Three Steles of Seth*; *Zostrianos*; *First Apocalypse of James*.
- ii) Throne-room scenes: *The Gospel of Egyptians*;⁶⁴ *The Coptic Apocalypse of Paul; the Hypostasis of the Archons*; *On the Origin of the World* - the last two contain pericopes which refer to the repentance, ascent and enthronement of Sabaoth.

e. *New Testament Pseudepigrapha and Later Christian Material.*

We have three main sources for this material:

- i) E. Hennecke, W. Schneemelcher, and R. McL. Wilson, eds., *New Testament Apocrypha*. 2 vols. London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1973, 1975 containing:
The Apocalypse of Paul (Greek) and *Epistula Apostolorum* (Ethiopic and Coptic).
- ii) E. A. W. Budge, *Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*. London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1913 for:
(a) The Gospel of Bartholomew (= the Book of the Resurrection).

⁶² This work includes a succinct summary of the Gnostic myth (including a schematic) based on the account found in 'the secret book according to John' [pp. 12-14].

⁶³ Most of these works contain material which depicts elaborate and obscure descriptions of the heavenly realm and of heavenly journeys. A large proportion of these intricate accounts are of secondary interest to our present study of the throne-room scene in particular, however they do contribute relevant information to the extensive Gnostic cosmic and heavenly view.

⁶⁴ In the section *Gos Eg.* III 43,8-44,9 (=IV 53,3-54,13) the Domedon Doxomedon aeon is portrayed as a heavenly throne-room - earlier in the text (III 41,13-15 = IV 51, 3-5) Domedon [Lord of the house] Doxomedon [Lord of glory], the 'aeon of the aeons and the light', came into being at the same time as the trinity of the Father, Mother, and Son - where the focal item is the 'throne of his glory.' No one appears to be sitting on the throne and it is also unclear to whom it belongs. The possessor is perhaps the thrice-male child who resides in this aeon or Doxomedon. Whoever it is his name is inscribed on a wooden tablet attached to the throne. This plaque is engraved 'with an inscription on it made up of all the vowels of the Greek alphabet with each vowel listed twenty-two times' - the total number of letter in the Semitic alphabet. It should be noted that this scene is not in the highest heaven nor does the throne belong to the Supreme god. This is a characteristic of the throne-room scenes within the Gnostic corpus.

(b) The Mysteries of Saint John the Apostle and Holy Virgin.

(c) An Encomium on Saint John the Baptist, by Saint John Chrysostom.

iii) W. Wright, 'The Departure of My Lady Mary from This World,' reprinted for private circulation from the *Journal of Sacred Literature and Biblical Record* 6. London: Mitchell & Hughes, 1865. pp 1-29 containing the Six Books Apocalypse of the Virgin.⁶⁵

f. Jewish Hekhalot, and other Later Jewish Material.

i) For the *Hekhalot* works - *Hekhalot Rabbati*, *Hekhalot Zutarti*, *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, and *Merkavah Rabbah* - reference is made to: (a) P. Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*. TSAJ 2 Tübingen: Mohr, (Siebeck), 1981. (b) M. D. Swartz, *Mystical prayer in Ancient Judaism: An Analysis of Ma'aseh Merkavah*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) 1992.

ii) The Falasha texts⁶⁶ - *Te'Ezaza Sanbat* [The Commandments of the Sabbath]; *The Apocalypse of Gregorios*; *Abba Elijah*; and the *Falasha Prayers* - are found in W. Leslau, *Falasha Anthology*. YJS 6. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951.

iii) M. Gaster, *Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Medieval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha and Samaritan Archaeology*. Vol. 1 [of 3] London: Maggs Bros., 1925-28 contains some interesting texts whose origins derive from the pre-Christian age. Those of interest to our studies are: the Sword of Moses [A & B]; the Hebrew Vision [II-VIII]; *Gedulat Moshe*.⁶⁷

3. Conclusion.

There is much continuity and influence within this material that belongs to the various corpora of literary works to which we have just referred. Probably the best way to look at these interrelationships is not so much as a river with occasional tributaries, nor as a tree with frequent branches, but rather as a web with many radiating threads and linkages. Unfortunately, such structures can lead potentially to many inherent dangers of entrapment.

In our context here, A. F. Segal⁶⁸ has recently referred to 'lumpers' and 'splitters,' defining them respectively as, 'those who put different materials together for comparison, versus those who distinguish carefully between cases for contrast.' He then goes on to suggest that he 'prefers not to choose between either camp.' To continue the metaphor, we will, however at times, 'tabernacle' on both sides of this divide when we consider the various and highly diverse material which we have just listed. Nevertheless we will also strive to heed the recent renewed warnings of not falling into the trap of parallelomania.⁶⁹ However 'suffice it to say, that the tree of knowledge bears many varieties of exotic fruit and one can hardly expect mortals to refrain from comparing them and classifying them in accordance with their kind'.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Towards the end of the fifth book of this work there is an interesting section uniquely included in the translation found in Smith Lewis (1902). See Bauckham (1998) pg. 349. In quoting it I will refer to it in abbreviation as 'ApMary (6 Books) 5th bk. [ASL]'.

⁶⁶ Leslau (1951) [pg. xxxvii-xxxviii, xlii] notes that these are Ethiopian works which represented the Jewish faith which has been influenced slightly by Abyssinian Christianity. The Falashas were acquainted with the Old Testament, but not with the Talmud nor with any other Jewish literature except some apocrypha and pseudepigrapha (e.g. the Book of Jubilees). Their form of Judaism is primitive and might date from a time when the Misnah and the Talmud were not yet compiled.

⁶⁷ It is known also in other versions as the Ascension of Moses.

⁶⁸ Segal (1995) pg. 95.

⁶⁹ Most recently in a lecture (April, 2001) 'The Perils of Parallels,' James R. Davila. St. Andrews University. See also Sandmel (1962) pp. 1-13; Donaldson (1983) pp. 193-210.

⁷⁰ Baumgarten (1988) pg. 213.

II Background Subjects to the Inaugural Throne-room Vision.

Before we look specifically at the inaugural throne-room vision of Revelation chapter 4 and 5, we will look at a few subjects which have a direct bearing on this initial vision.¹ John's virtually continuous employment of the Jewish sacred writings will be highlighted. However we will note the lack of the influence of the canonical apocalypse of Daniel on this first throne-vision, even although it has an important role to play at other stages of the book. His actual technique of interpretation will be explored and the version(s) of the Scripture which he used will be discussed. The effect of the religious life of Israel, especially the temple and tabernacle, will be explored in relation to throne scenes in general and John's inaugural vision in particular. Revelation contains a large amount of hymnic compositions (our vision contains five such examples). The Jewish background of this material will be examined, along with the source and setting of the actual songs incorporated within the book. There will be a rebuttal of the presence of any significant Graeco-Roman influence within the actual throne-vision itself. We will consider the Roman imperial court ceremonial and also Greek and Roman drama in this section. Then John's ascent experience will be placed in its Jewish background. Lastly, and immediately prior to the inaugural vision being examined in detail,² a short introduction to it will be furnished along with an outline of the two chapters.

A. The Use of the Old Testament.

It is difficult to ascertain whether or not John used works outwith the Old Testament when he was composing his book.³ Potentially he could certainly have had at hand such works as the Book of Watchers, the Apocalypse of Zephaniah, Ezekiel the Tragedian and works found at Qumran among others.⁴ However, it is patently obvious that his work is steeped in Old Testament allusion. D. M. Smith could state, 'The author's language and thought world is the Old Testament, as he understands it, particularly the prophetic writings. Without them he could not have written at all. Thus the document itself is, literally, quite inconceivable apart from the Old Testament.'⁵ The writer's mind was saturated with the Scriptures, and as a result he also assumed the prerequisite of his readers and hearers that they had a clear working knowledge and understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures. He sought his inspiration across the gamut of the Old Testament literature as he delved into the Pentateuch, the history books, poetry and wisdom, and the prophetic writings. Thus the importance of the Old Testament Scriptures for the writer of the Apocalypse cannot be overestimated. With this in mind, we will briefly consider two related subjects. Firstly, what was the actual version (or versions) of Scripture that John used? Secondly, what was his technique of interpretation as he handled this material? Then, finally, and more particularly, we will consider why the throne vision of Daniel 7 has such a limited influence on this inaugural throne-vision.

¹ In fact some of these topics will also have an influence on the remainder of the throne-scenes within the rest of the book and especially the final vision.

² It will be studied in two main sections: the worship of the heavenly sovereign (chapter 4), and the investiture and worship of the Lamb (chapter 5).

³ Charlesworth (1987) [pg. 24] observes, 'Having acknowledged the Apocalypse's dependence on and independence from the Jewish apocalypses, we should emphasize that the Apocalypse does not quote any extant apocalypse, nor has it been influenced directly by any of the many Jewish apocalypses.'

⁴ Charles (1920) [pp. lxxxii-lxxxiii] has a short list of what he considers to be passages to which John was indebted. It mainly comprises of references to 1 Enoch.

⁵ Smith (1972) pg. 62.

1. Actual OT Version Used.

It can be a relatively rare occurrence to find universal agreement within scholarly circles on a particular subject. Nevertheless here we would appear to have one of these *recherché* moments to savour, as a dissenting voice against John's frequent use of the Old Testament Scriptures appears to be completely absent. However this state of agreement does not extend to other aspects of the use of the Old Testament, as is apparent in our consideration of this topic and the next one. In fact, there has been much discussion as to which version(s) - of those potentially available to him - John used as he composed the Apocalypse. Firstly, it has to be noted that our actual knowledge of the relationship between the various Greek texts and the Hebrew text is rather limited. This exacerbates the task from the very outset. The second point that has to be made is to highlight the great difficulty of this quest also, because of the way John uses, modifies and amalgamates texts.⁶ It has led A Farrer to observe, 'It belongs to St. John's character as a new prophet that he scarcely ever quotes a whole sentence from his predecessors. Everything he writes must be freshly phrased or at least freshly combined. No author cites so little and alludes so much'⁷ There are no 'direct quotations' within Revelation, but rather his technique is one of allusion. Thus textual identification is very difficult because of this lack of formal quotations and their allusive and therefore elusive nature.

J. M. Court⁸ observes that modern scholars are agreed on very little, beyond the extent of the general influence of the prophetic writings of the Old Testament (especially Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel) on the author of the Apocalypse. However it is feasible to determine with reasonable certainty the texts which would have been available to him.

P. Trudinger, in his article on this subject,⁹ has set out the various choices and their supporters that were available to the author of Revelation. The first two are the main considerations, while the following three are very eccentric suggestions:

- a. The Hebrew text.¹⁰
- b. H. B. Swete states, 'The Apocalyptist...availed himself of the Alexandrian version of the OT'¹¹ that is the LXX.¹²
- c. A *Volksbibel*, that is an Aramaic version of the LXX, in popular contemporary use.¹³
- d. C. Smits¹⁴ suggests that the Greek version of Symmachus underlies a number of 'OT quotations.'
- e. C. C. Torrey¹⁵ argues for an Aramaic original of Revelation but states that the writer made his quotations from the Hebrew O.T.

From Trudinger's studies some of his observations are included in the following points. As a generalisation, it seems credible that John was informed primarily by Semitic Old Testament sources rather than Greek (this is against Swete). There is a significant number of Old

⁶ There is a remarkable range in the estimates of the total amount of allusions to the Old Testament texts found in Revelation. So, Fekkes (1994) [pg. 62] records the highest number as 700 [J. Staehelin, *700 Parallelen die Quellgründe der Apokalypse* (Bern, 1961)], and the lowest number as 250 [Charles (1920) I pp. lxxviii-lxxxi], and with a range of estimates falling between these two extremes.

⁷ Farrer (1964) pg. 30.

⁸ Court (1994) pg. 12.

⁹ Trudinger (1966) pp. 82-88. This article is a summary of 'The Text of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation,' (ThD Dissertation, Boston University, 1963).

¹⁰ Charles (1920). So, also Ozanne (1965). Mazzaferrri (1989) [pp. 56, 379] writes, 'Indeed, he goes to the very extreme of archaising his style in mindful mimicry of classical biblical Hebrew, often at the expense of the precise rules of Greek expression. As his words were read aloud they would ring prophetically, and in their own right identify John as a prophet in classical OT style.'

¹¹ Swete (1908) pg. clv.

¹² See, recently Schmidt (1991) [pp. 602-603] argues 'the linguistic influence of the LXX in the book of Revelation goes beyond images and phrases derived from textual allusions to features of the syntactical style itself. Revelation thus contains some of the best examples of septuagintalsms in the NT.'

¹³ E. Böhl, *Forschungen nach einer Volksbibel zur Zeit Jesus* (1873).

¹⁴ C. Smits, *Oud-Testamentische Citaten in het Nieuwe Testament* (1955).

¹⁵ C.C. Torrey, *The Apocalypse of John*. (1958).

Testament quotations and allusions that have their closest affinity with the text of the Aramaic Targumim.¹⁶ There are indications that John knew a Hebrew textual tradition other than that preserved in the Massoretic tradition. Trudinger made two predominant conclusions from the above observations. Firstly, they seem to point to a fluid state of Old Testament texts at the time of composition of Revelation. Secondly it appears that John was steeped in the tradition of the Palestinian synagogue, 'he "learned his Bible", so to speak, in a Palestinian milieu.'¹⁷ More recently this topic of John's source text(s) has been considered again by S. Moyise.¹⁸ In his article he focuses on the core issue: Did John use the Hebrew Scriptures, the LXX translation or both? He suggests that any effort to demonstrate the exclusive use of either the LXX (Swete) or the Hebrew (Ozanne) demands 'extensive special pleading' and therefore should be rejected. Based on the evidence given in his paper, he persuasively concludes that John knew and used both Greek and Semitic texts, and the major view that he preferred Semitic sources continues to be unproven.

Finally we must reiterate that because of the author of the Apocalypse's highly idiosyncratic style in handling Old Testament passages, an investigation of this kind is by nature 'far more of an art than a science.'

2. John's Use of the Old Testament.

As we have already noted, John never cites Scripture verbatim, but his work is brimming with allusions and echoes¹⁹ of the Old Testament. Allusions to the same Old Testament pericope can occur again and again throughout the book, taking on fresh nuances at each appearance. So the question needs to be asked, "Is the use of his sources merely a haphazard, piecemeal approach where he simply makes 'pick and mix' sorties into the Old Testament, or does he perform a far more deliberate and regulated *modus operandi*?" It has been suggested that John, on a superficial level, 'uses its words, images, phrases and patterns as a language arsenal in order to make his own theological statement. The author of Rev. is not bent on the exposition and explication of the OT as authoritative Scripture.'²⁰ However R. Bauckham can advocate that John's method of interpretation is highly disciplined. He used contemporary techniques of Jewish exegesis, especially that of *gezera sawa*, by which passages sharing common words or phrases are interpreted in relation to each other.²¹

A recent and continuing debate²² has developed - on this subject of the use of the Old Testament in Revelation - between S. Moyise and G. K. Beale. The catalyst for this debate was the publication of the monograph *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* by S. Moyise.²³ In this book he suggests that a source text continues to communicate in its new background and its new context imposes new meanings other than those the original writer meant.²⁴ G. K. Beale challenged this position. He argued that although the author of Revelation in his use of Old Testament sources did give them new significance by placing them in a new context, he did

¹⁶ McNamara (1972) [pg. 142] states that, 'the present writer has been led to see that the Apocalypse is "the New Testament book which shows the greatest number of contacts with the Palestinian Targum."' [His quote is from McNamara (1966) pg. 255].

¹⁷ Trudinger (1966) pg. 88. Contrast Montgomery (1926) who argues that John was, above all, a poet whose education was in the rich Hellenistic cultural milieu of an Asia Minor city.

¹⁸ Moyise (1999) pp. 97-113.

¹⁹ See Paulin (1988) for a treatment and classification of these terms. He deals with verbal, thematic, and structural parallels. He classifies allusions into 'certain, probable, possible, uncertain, and non allusions'. While with an echo, he suggests that the author is merely using language that was 'in the air,' or a 'stock apocalyptic concept.'

²⁰ Schüssler-Fiorenza (1985) pp. 135-36. For a similar position, see Vos (1965) pp. 51-52.

²¹ Bauckham (1993) pg. xi. See also Fekkes (1994) pp. 286-290.

²² For a comprehensive summary and evaluation of this debate, see Paulien (2001) pp. 5-22. For the response to this article see Beale (2001) pp. 23-34, and Moyise (2001) pp. 35-40.

²³ Moyise (1995).

²⁴ *ibid.* pp. 110-111.

not alter what the original writer had actually meant.²⁵ S. Moyise responded in an article²⁶ which I have summarised to highlight his perceived differences from Beale's position:

<u>Question</u>	<u>Moyise</u>	<u>Beale</u>
Do NT writers give texts new meanings?	Yes	No
Do NT writers take OT texts out of their context?	Yes	No
Does the meaning derive from the creative process of the reader?	Yes	No
Does the meaning derive solely from the author's intention?	No	Yes

G. K. Beale then countered by restating his position in the respect of his understanding of the original context and the authorial intention.²⁷

In his résumé on this continuing debate Paulien²⁸ begins by asking whether it is semantic or real.²⁹ He suggests that both are defending against perceived extremes of the other's position and perhaps that both sides are correct at least in part - each is right in what he confirms, but wrong in what he denies. When both sides are read together 'one wonders at times if it is much ado about nothing'³⁰ and that if Moyise were to write a commentary on the Apocalypse, it would not differ greatly from Beale's.³¹

For our considerations at present I think that it is important to introduce the proposition that John understood his book to be the climax of Old Testament prophecy.³² He had received a revelation from Jesus Christ, through the agency of the Holy Spirit. At the outset of his vision we learn that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day (Rev. 1:10) and he experiences a vision of risen Christ. This gives his prophecy Christological control, as he is commanded to write what he has seen, what is, and what is to take place (Rev. 1:19).³³ Then at important junctures in his book John again mentions the Spirit's involvement - the inaugural throne-room vision (Rev. 4:2) and the final vision of the Garden-city (Rev. 21:10).

Old Testament prophets were able to receive the vision (both visual and audible) while the people were encouraged to hear the word of the Lord. So too John had an audible and visual experience while his audience was encouraged to listen to the Spirit (Rev. 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). However the Old Testament prophets had restricted vision - they saw through a glass dimly as it were. John, on the other hand, had complete affinity with the writer of Hebrews - God in times past had spoken through the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken through his Son (Heb. 1:1-2). John has had a *personal* communication from the Christ mediated by the Holy Spirit, and because of this special revelation made only to him, he is enabled to interpret all the Scriptures from the perspective of their prophetic goal.

²⁵ Beale (1998) pp. 51-52.

²⁶ Moyise (1999A) pp. 54-58.

²⁷ Beale (1999A) pp. 152-180.

²⁸ Paulien (2001) pp. 18-22.

²⁹ The debate has become more nuanced as it has progressed. Analogies of a fruit basket, fruit salad, apple sauce, ripples in a pond, and commentary on a golf shot, have been offered. Also the topic of 'faith perspectives' has been broached.

³⁰ Paulien (2001) pp. 18-19.

³¹ Paulien (2001) [pg. 19] then proposes where he considers the disconnection to be based. 'For Beale the "author's intention" is not limited to the perspective of the individual OT author, but includes the divine superintendence and authorship of Scripture as a whole. So his approach to the NT use of the OT is normative, comprehensive and global. For Moyise, on the other hand, the concept of "author's intention" is limited to what a human writer intended at a specific turn of events in history. His approach to the OT text, therefore, is descriptive, immediate, and local. Given these differing definitions, it is not surprising that Beale and Moyise would disagree on whether or not NT writers respected the context of the OT.'

³² See Bauckham (1993), in particular, chapter 9 where using this principle he develops the theme of the conversion of the nations.

³³ Cf. Rev. 19:10 where the testimony of Jesus is Spirit of prophecy.

3. Lack of Danielic Influence.

That the various motifs found in the throne-room scene of Daniel 7 have had a profound influence on a variety of subsequent literature, cannot be denied.³⁴ So for instance, the figure of the "Ancient of Days" is found in the Gnostic treatise, Rossi,³⁵ where the Father is enthroned on high, robed in white, a crown of pearls upon his venerable head. The Ethiopic Lives of the Prophets: Daniel concludes with the sentence, "I saw the Ancient of Days, and the hair of his head (was) white like wool."³⁶ 1Enoch 71:10 describes the 'Chief of Days,'³⁷ his head was white and pure as wool, and his raiment indescribable.³⁸ Furthermore, the 'fiery throne,' its 'fiery wheels' and the 'stream of fire issuing from the throne' reappear repeatedly in a plethora of writings.³⁹ More particularly in Revelation, Daniel's throne room vision is alluded to in three main clusters:⁴⁰ a) The vision of one like the Son of Man (Rev. 1:7-20)⁴¹ b) The emergence of the sea beast (Rev. 13:1-10)⁴² c) The final judgments (Rev. 20:4-15).⁴³ Yet, when attention is turned towards John's inaugural and final visions, the influence of the Danielic vision is negligible if not totally absent.⁴⁴ However, this is not the view of G. K. Beale who has certainly contributed much to the study of the influence of the book of Daniel on Revelation.⁴⁵ He states that 'an overview of the two chapters together [Rev. 4 & 5] reveals that they exhibit a unified structure which corresponds more to the structure of Daniel 7 than with any other vision of the OT.'⁴⁶ He then sets out his presentation, the contents of which we have reproduced in the format of the table which follows:

Elements.	Dan. 7.	Rev. 4-5.
1. Introductory vision phraseology.	7:9	4:1
2. Throne(s) set in heaven.	7:9a	4:2a
3. God sitting on a throne.	7:9b	4:2b
4. God's appearance.	7:9c	4:3a
5. Fire before the throne.	7:9d-10a	4:5
6. Heavenly servants surround the throne.	7:10b	4:4b, 6b-10; 5:8, 11, 14
7. Book(s) before the throne.	7:10c	5:1ff.
8. The book(s) opened.	7:10d	5:2-5, 9
9. Divine/messianic figure approaches throne to receive authority.	7:13-14a;	5:5b-7, 9a, 12-13
10. The kingdom's scope 'all peoples, nations, and tongues.'	7:14a [MT]	5:9b
11. The seer's emotional distress on account of the vision.	7:15	5:4
12. The seer approaches heavenly servant for interpretation.	7:16	5:5a

³⁴ Our main consideration in our discussion will only be on the throne-room scene. However it should be noted that other passages in the book of Daniel find echoes in later works. Thus, to use Revelation as an example: Dan. 1:14>Rev. 2:10; Dan. 2:28>Rev. 1:1; Dan. 10:5>Rev. 1:13; Dan. 10:6>Rev. 1:14b-15. Swete, (1907) [pg. cliii] suggests that 'in proportion to its length the Book of Daniel yields by far the greatest number' of allusions (31) second only in absolute number to Isaiah (46).

³⁵ For translation see Kropp (1930-31) II pp. 175ff. Another Gnostic work, *Apoc. Paul.* 22. 24-27 refers to an old man on his throne with a white garment, in the seventh heaven.

³⁶ Knibb (1980) pg. 206.

³⁷ Cf. 1En. 46:2; 47:3; 48:2.

³⁸ Cf. 1En. 47:3.

³⁹ These topics will be considered later in the section 'Motifs and Features Absent from the Inaugural Vision.' The discussions as to whether the Book of Watchers (1En. 14:18-19), which contains the same motifs, (although not the fiery throne) is earlier or later than Daniel is of little consequence for us as both these works contain these motifs which reflect at the least, a common tradition.

⁴⁰ There is also a clear allusion of the ten horns and ten kings - Dan. 7:24a>Rev. 17:12.

⁴¹ Dan. 7:9 >Rev. 1:14; Dan. 7:13>Rev. 1:7a, 13a. It should also be noted here that 'one like the Son of Man' is referred to in Rev 14:14 as being seated on a white cloud.

⁴² Dan. 7:4-7>Rev. 13:2; Dan. 7:8>Rev. 13:5; Dan. 7:21>Rev. 13:7.

⁴³ Dan. 7:9>Rev. 20:4; Dan. 7:10b>Rev. 20:12; Dan. 7:22>Rev. 20:4.

⁴⁴ As we shall discuss below and later, this is certainly true for Rev.4. However there may be some correspondence of Rev. 5 with the second section of Dan. 7 as both function as missionary and investitive scenes.

⁴⁵ See our bibliography for a selection of his works.

⁴⁶ Beale (1999) pg. 314.

13. The saints given divine authority to reign over a kingdom.	7:18, 22, 27a	5:10
14 Concluding mention of God's eternal reign.	7:27b	5:13-14.
Both visions also contain the image of a sea.	7:2-3	4:6

However this structural configuration shares much common ground with many other throne-visions. In this vein, J. -P. Ruiz counters Beale's Revelation 4-5 correspondence with the Daniel 7 model by suggesting the following hypothetical correlation with Isaiah 6:⁴⁷

Elements.	Isa. 6.	Rev. 4-5.
1. Vision Introduced.	6:1	4:1
2. Throne in heaven.	6:1	4:2
3. God seated on throne.	6:1	4:2
4. God's appearance.	6:1	4:3
5. Fire before throne.	6:4,6	4:3
6. Heavenly attendants.	6:2	4:5
7-8. No mention of books.		
9-10. Isa. 6 involves conferral of prophetic commission.		
11. Seer's reaction.	6:5	5:4
12. Heavenly figure attends to seer.	6:6-7	5:5
13-14. In Isa. 6 God's demonstration of power has a punitive character.		

'The sort of mechanical adherence to the Daniel model which Beale proposes denies John due mastery over his own work, and this is unacceptable.'⁴⁸ When some of the elements within the visions are looked at more closely, we find that there are clear disparities between them. So, the images of sea and the books are both completely different entities. The emotional distress felt by the seer is also substantially dissimilar: one is fear while the other is sorrow. The description of God in Daniel is anthropomorphic, while in Revelation, it is obviously not. Daniel takes an active role in approaching the heavenly attendant and he takes part in the conversation,⁴⁹ while John's role is purely passive. So, when one peels away all the common traditional motifs, such as the introductory phraseology, the throne, the heavenly attendants, a figure approaching the throne, which are frequently found in throne visions, then there is little left which really points to any sort of continuity.

For the present, two other phrases which occur in Rev 5 warrant some mention here. The expression (Rev. 5:9)⁵⁰ 'from every tribe and language and people and nation' is possibly an expansion of the tripartite phrase found in Dan. 7:14a.⁵¹ However it also appears throughout Daniel (Dan. 3:4, 7; 4:1; 5:19; 6:25; cf. Gen. 10:5, 20, 31; Jdt. 3:8; 4Ezra 3:7).⁵² Secondly the phrase, 'myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands [of angels]' (Rev. 5:11) is very similar to Dan. 7 10 'a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him.'⁵³ This was certainly a very frequent motif in a range of later literature (1En. 14:22; ApZeph. 4:1; 8:1; 1 Clem. 34:6; ApPaul 14; *OnOrgWld* 105.20; *Merk. Rab.* §676; *Hek. Rab.* § 185; *Ma'aseh Merk.* § 546; GBart Fol. 7b; Falasha Prayers 5). There would appear to be an earlier background to this concept in the Old Testament. In Num. 10:36 there is a refrain, 'Return, O LORD of the ten thousand thousands of Israel' but the actual meaning is obscure. Deut. 33:2 refers to 'myriads of holy ones' with the LORD coming from Sinai. A targum

⁴⁷ Ruiz (1989) pg. 126.

⁴⁸ *ibid.* pg. 121.

⁴⁹ This is an interesting motif which is found frequently in later ascents to the heavenly throne-room. Although Daniel's vision is not technically an ascent, he plays a more active role as he approaches and converses, rather than simply viewing and recording. This is also the case, in fact, with Isaiah as he is touched on the lips with a hot coal.

⁵⁰ This four-fold phrase appears 7 times in Revelation although always in a slightly different guise. See Bauckham (1993A) pg. 67.

⁵¹ See Aune (1997) pp. 337, 361-2; Beale (1999) pp. 359-60.

⁵² See Bauckham (1993) pp. 326-337.

⁵³ See Aune (1997) pp. 336-7, 363-4; Beale (1999) pp. 364 for discussion.

[Yonathan] of this verse read 'myriads of angels.'⁵⁴ There is also an interesting passage in Ps. 68:17 which refers to the Lord's 'mighty chariotry,⁵⁵ twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands.' In the Septuagint translation [Ps 67:18 LXX] the Greek terms, the magnitude order, and the context of praise is similar to Rev. 5:11. However, this detail of Dan. 7 was often adopted without any of the other elements of Dan 7 (see list of references above), so that Rev. 4 & 5's dependence on it need not suggest any wider modelling of John's throne-room scene on Dan. 7. Also if Rev. 5:11 does reflect Dan. 7:10, John has for some reason reversed the order of magnitude.

The really important factor is what John actually lacks from the Danielic vision. All these are important issues to which we shall return later. We have already noted above God's anthropomorphic features, Daniel's active role and his fear, however there are others. The fire motif is very prominent in Daniel. There are a fiery throne, fiery wheels and a fiery stream flowing through the midst of the proceedings. Although there is mention of the seven flaming torches by John, this fiery predominance is lacking in Revelation.

The initial section of Daniel 7 is clearly a judgment scene,⁵⁶ and this is certainly not the concept that John wants in his inaugural vision which functions to portray a place of praise and worship for the transcendent God which moves towards the investiture and commissioning of the Lamb. This notion of a worship scene is completely absent from Daniel.⁵⁷ Also this throne scene takes place on earth.⁵⁸ This is the location of the Great White Throne scene of Revelation which has most certainly been influenced by Daniel 7, but Rev. 4 & 5 obviously takes place in heaven.⁵⁹ Finally, Isaiah 6 and Ezek. 1, which clearly are models for Rev. 4 & 5, are inaugural visions for the prophets in question - this is the case in Rev. 4 & 5, but this is not so in Dan. 7.

B. Temple and Tabernacle Influence.

1. Background.

The temple and tabernacle⁶⁰ obviously played a central role in the religious life of ancient Israel,⁶¹ and their surrounding neighbours.⁶² B. Otzen⁶³ suggests that 'the temple is at once an *imago mundi*, "image of the world", reflecting the cosmos, and is *imago coeli*, "image of heaven", reflecting the heavenly world. The temple is where heaven and earth meet; indeed, the temple is heaven on earth.' With this close association of the terrestrial and the celestial, there was a clear belief that the earthly place of worship was based on a heavenly pattern [תבנית] (Exod. 25:9,40; cf. 1Chron. 28:11-19). This was to be later expounded by some New

⁵⁴ See Schultz (1971) [pp. 282-307] for discussion on the translation of this text.

⁵⁵ Olyan (1993) [pg. 25] equates this term with angelic beings.

⁵⁶ Interestingly a common theme within Israel's book of praise, the Psalms. See, Pss. 7:7, 8; 9:4, 7; 11:4, 5; 50:6; 75:7; 76:8; 82:1; 122:5.

⁵⁷ Lacocque (1979) [pp.124-6] attempts to suggest that Dan.7 portrays the throne-scene as the Temple, even although there are no explicit (or for that matter implicit) clues to such an interpretation within the text. The main thrust of his argument is that Dan. 2 and 7 are Maccabean glosses, and that 'the stone not cut by human hands' (Dan. 2:34) 'represents Mount Zion, the Temple not built by human hands. So the vision in chapter 7 has the Temple as its framework' (pp. 124-5). Secondly, he equates the 'son of man' with the High Priest. However his arguments are very unconvincing.

⁵⁸ See Goldingay (1989) pp. 164-5 *contra* Baldwin (1978) pp.136, 141 & Lacocque (1979) pg. 142.

⁵⁹ It should be noted that some works which reflect Daniel 7 read it as depicting the throne of God in heaven as it is permanently (1En. 14:1; 1En. 70; *Ma'aseh Merk.* §546). Also Rev. 14:14 'seated on the cloud was one like the Son of Man' perhaps shows some link with the heavenly in this verse.

⁶⁰ The historicity or otherwise of the tabernacle, along with other critical scholarly matters related to this subject, would have not, of course, been an issue for the writer of Revelation. He would have approached the Jewish writings uncritically, and he would simply have integrated and adapted the material as he saw fit within his vision narratives. For discussions on these critical concerns see, Rowley (1967) pg. 51; Cross (1947) pp. 45-68; Haran (1965) pp.191-236.

⁶¹ For the background of the temple, priesthood and related cultic activities, see Haran (1978); Clements (1965).

⁶² See, Ahlström (1975) pp. 67-83.

⁶³ Otzen (1984) pg. 207.

Testament writers (Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5).⁶⁴ The notion of God's heavenly throne being associated with this heavenly temple was also clearly portrayed in early Jewish thought (Pss. 11:4; 29:9-10; Mic. 1:2-3; Azar. 1:31, 33-34; cf. Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 43:7). Thus heaven is not only the divine dwelling place, i.e. the temple, but it is also the royal palace, housing the king's throne.⁶⁵ Notwithstanding the previous link with a monarchical dwelling, it is possible that the concept of the throne was also associated with the temple. The prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 17:12) identifies a 'glorious high throne' [כסא כבוד מרומן] with a 'shrine of our sanctuary' [מקום מקדשנו]. Additionally, there are two schools of thought regarding the symbolic significance of the ark and its cover found within the Holy of Holies. The first is that it was essentially a storage chest, however the second is that it was a sort of empty throne of God. M. Haran has also suggested that 'whether one sees the ark as a throne or a chest, one cannot entirely exclude the alternative'.⁶⁶

2. The Influence on OT Throne-room Scenes.

The earlier throne visions of the Old Testament appear not to have been much influenced by temple imagery. This would include the vision of Moses and his companions (Exod. 24:9-11),⁶⁷ Micaiah's vision (1Kgs. 22:19-23), Job's throne-room scene (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6) and Daniel's vision (Dan. 7). However, Isaiah's vision depicts the Lord sitting on his lofty throne with the temple seen as the back-drop completely swamped by the mere hem of his garment. Whether the reference here is to the heavenly sanctuary or its earthly counterpart in Jerusalem, matters little.⁶⁸ The point is that there is a close correlation between the throne and the place of worship with its altar, smoke and song. Ezekiel's visions (Ezek. 1 and 10) also have been clearly influenced by the temple. This is particularly so in the scene in chapter 10. In fact in this chapter, the author makes the point of mentioning twice that the cherubim 'were the living creatures that I saw by the river Chebar' (vv. 15, 20). D. J. Halperin suggests that 'Given that so much of chapter 10 was written to interpret chapter 1, it seems to me more likely that the *hayyot* = cherubim equation was made by someone who was baffled by the *hayyot* and needed a context in which he could make sense of them. He found this context in the Jerusalem Temple'.⁶⁹ There is also mention of the container of burning coals (Ezek. 1:13; 10:2), burning torches [LXX lamps] (Ezek. 1:13), the threshold of the house, the house itself and its courts (Ezek. 10:3-5, 18-19), and the man clothed in linen (Ezek. 10:2, 6-7).

3. The Influence on Extra-Biblical Material.

The temple appears to have had a large effect on many of the other throne-room scenes outwith the Old Testament.⁷⁰ In fact very few remained untouched by at least some detail. This influence can be seen in basically two ways. There can simply be a reference to the temple being present in heaven.⁷¹ However, far more importantly the throne room can be depicted as

⁶⁴ For a study on the use and role of the 'pattern' [תבנית] motif in the New Testament and early Jewish thought, see Willcox (1988). See also, Maier (1964) pp. 106-48.

⁶⁵ Cf. the juxtaposition of Solomon's palace and the temple (1Kgs. 6-7). See Mohlenbrink, (1932) pg. 48ff.

⁶⁶ Haran (1978) pg. 247. For a discussion on the ark as a throne and chest see Haran (1959) pg. 30-38, 89-94 and Haran (1978) pg. 246ff.

⁶⁷ However the Targums to the passage - *Pseudo-Jonathan*, *Neofiti 1* and *Onqelos* - all refer to rejoicing in their sacrifices which were received.

⁶⁸ There would appear to be no real consensus among scholars. See Knierim (1968) [pg. 50] for a survey of opinions.

⁶⁹ Halperin (1988) pg. 43, (see pp. 39-44). Also see Halperin (1976) pp. 129-141, and compare Houk (1971) pp. 42-54.

⁷⁰ See Hamerton-Kelly (1970) who suggests that there were two dominant attitudes to the temple in the early theocracy, represented by Ezekiel and P tradition respectively, and that the apocalyptic tradition derives from the former. See also Otzen (1984) pp. 199-215.

⁷¹ Cf. 1En. 25:5. In *b.Hag.* 12b, the temple and altar are in the fourth heaven, *Zebul*. See Gruenwald (1980) [pg. 72] for other references within rabbinic literature. There is also a temple in the fourth heaven in Ged. Mos. 13. In *ApZeph. A* [Clement, *Stromata* 5.11.77] angels called 'lords' dwell in the temples of salvation. In *Fal. Prayers* 8 there is a holy temple in heaven, while in the *Apocalypse of Gorgorios*, the temple containing the tabernacle is in Paradise.

the temple. The throne vision in the Book of the Watchers (1En. 14) shows, perhaps, some temple-like features. The cherubim are mentioned (1En. 14:11,18). G. W. E. Nickelsburg, suggests that its similarities to Ezek. 40-48; the reference to the 'house' (1En. 14:10) of the Deity; the mention of the eternal sanctuary (1En. 12:4; 15:3); the possibility that at least certain of the angels can be construed as priests; and the reworking of the material in this vision in the Testament of Levi which is explicitly a temple, indicates that Enoch is describing his ascent to the heavenly temple 'and his progress through its *temenos* to the door of the holy of holies, where that chariot throne of God is set.'⁷² M. Himmelfarb notes that in addition to the two houses that Enoch passes through (vv. 10-14, 15-17), the Greek text of 1En. 14:9 refers to a *building*, hailstones and fire (the Ethiopic refers only to a 'wall'). Thus there are three houses which 'provides a heavenly structure that matches a three-chamber temple quite nicely.'⁷³ Nevertheless, others have played down the influence of the temple in this vision. C. Rowland writes, 'But apart from the fact that God's dwelling consists of two parts, there is hardly enough similarity in detail to justify anything but the assumption that the basic outline of the Temple would have been taken by many apocalypticists as a reflection of the court of God in heaven.'⁷⁴ However our next consideration certainly does have clear associations with the temple.

The Qumranites had substituted the rejected Jerusalem sanctuary with the conviction that their community constituted a temple⁷⁵ which was closely linked with the heavenly temple. This notion is reflected in some of the writings discovered there. In the liturgical text, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, God's throne-room is depicted as a heavenly temple with the angels serving as priests (4Q403 1 ii 1-24; 4Q405 20-22 ii 1-14). Various terms used within these songs of praise refer to parts of the temple's architectural features and furnishings (tabernacle, sanctuary, inner rooms, vestibules, pillars, and veils among others).⁷⁶ The text itself is made up of thirteen songs to be performed only on the first thirteen Sabbaths of the year.⁷⁷ It has been noted by D. Dimant that 'the first six songs give a general description of the structure and significance of this heavenly realm. In the last six Sabbath songs, the gradual progress from the outer parts into the inner recesses of the heavenly temple unfolds.'⁷⁸

For the moment we will consider specifically just one more work which has been influenced by the temple, that is the Testament of Levi. B. Otzen has proposed that the author of this vision used the temple for a pattern of his various heavens; 'the temple is a microcosm, while heaven is macrocosm.'⁷⁹ In TLevi 5:1, an angel opened the gates of heaven, and Levi saw the holy temple and the Most High upon a throne of glory. Later on in chapter 8, Levi is invested as a priest. He is dressed in the regalia of that office. He is anointed, washed, fed, and his hands are filled with incense so that he might serve as a priest to the Lord. However, earlier in the vision there is an interesting scene in the sixth heaven where the 'angels of the presence of the Lord' 'minister before the Lord and make propitiation to the Lord for all the sins of ignorance of the righteous and they offer to the Lord a pleasant odour, a reasonable and bloodless offering.' (TLevi 3:5-6). This is a rather rare feature of Jewish throne visions.

⁷² Nickelsburg (1981) pg. 580.

⁷³ Himmelfarb (1993) pg. 14.

⁷⁴ Rowlands (1979) pp. 140-141.

⁷⁵ See Gärtner (1965); Kuhn (1965) pg. 181ff.

⁷⁶ See Davidson (1992) pp. 237-238; Charlesworth-Newsom (1999) pp. 8-9.

⁷⁷ Newsom (1990) pg. 102.

⁷⁸ Dimant (1992) pg. 41. She suggests that the author of the *Songs* 'drew equally from the three descriptions of the biblical sanctuaries: the Tabernacle in the Torah, the Temple of Solomon in the account of Kings-Chronicles and the future temple of Ezekiel' and also used extensively Ezekiel's visions in chapters 1 and 10 [pp. 42-43].

⁷⁹ Otzen (1984) pg. 208. In pages 207-208 he argues that 'Levi's vision furnishes an excellent example of the close connection between the Jerusalem temple and heavenly vision, and further, it illustrates perfectly the idea of the temple as an image of heaven.'

We will return to these and related issues at later stages in our discussions. However, for the present, it will suffice to mention that the temple continued to be an influence on other apocalypses, (including; 1En. 40; 2En. 7-9; ApAbr.18; AscIsa. 7-9; ApZeph. 8; 3Bar. 11-15⁸⁰). It also affected other literature. So the Jewish traditions of the heavenly temple were reworked into later patterns of Gnostic thought.⁸¹ Its influence can also be seen in the later *Hekhalot* literature where the Jewish mystic passes through various heavenly 'palaces' on his way to the throne-room. 'It is no coincidence that the term *hekhal* is taken from the architecture of the temple, where it is used precisely for the entrance hall to the holiest of holies.'⁸²

4. The Temple in Revelation.

The author of the Apocalypse is very much in line with this Jewish traditional thought of the heavenly temple.⁸³ The temple and its predecessor, the tabernacle, had a huge influence on the book. It can be referred to as a structure in heaven⁸⁴ (Rev. 11:19; 14:15,17; 15:5,6,8; 16:1)⁸⁵ which finally meets its demise (Rev. 21:22). However, more importantly, the word can also be used substitutively, for heaven, and in particular for the throne-room itself (Rev. 7:15; 16:17).⁸⁶ So, in his inaugural vision John merges the throne-room and the temple, thus consolidating them into one entity without any distinction. This will be argued later on in our study, but for now we will simply make a few general comments on the cultic activity and items of furniture found in the throne-room. The whole scene is one of worship, with the singing of hymns of praise and acts of reverence and complete homage performed by the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures. The living creatures have links with the cherubim, while the elders have many hieratic features with their white robes, harps, crowns, and the bowls of incense with their contents representing prayers. There is an impressive display of theophanic phenomena and items within the throne-room allude to the temple furniture of the golden menorah associated with the holy place, and the 'molten sea' situated in front of Solomon's temple. Later on in the book, at various stages, the altar comes into view and there is a temple ritual with the silence in heaven for about half an hour (Rev. 8:1).⁸⁷ John draws often on the throne-visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel which were both also, in their own right, influenced by the temple. Finally, it has been observed that 'he writes the whole book in a Hebraizing idiom that gives its language a hieratic traditional character.'⁸⁸

⁸⁰ For a discussion on these works see Himmelfarb (1993) pp. 36ff.

⁸¹ See De Conick (1999) [pp. 317-341] for a discussion on the influence of the heavenly temple on Valentinian cosmology and Christology. Cf. *Exc Theo* 38:1 where the archangel goes behind the curtain into the heavenly Holy of Holies, as the high priest did once a year.

⁸² Schäfer (1992) pg. 2.

⁸³ See McKelvey (1969) for the importance of the motif of the 'new temple' to the understanding of the New Testament doctrine of the church, and especially in respect to the Book of Revelation (pp. 155-178).

⁸⁴ Kiddle (1940) points out that the word 'temple' is used when John is speaking of God's relation to a rebellious world, and many of the punitive strokes come out of it (Rev. 11:19; 14:15-20; 15:6-8; 16:17-18).

⁸⁵ It is feasible that some or even all of this list could refer to the heavenly throne-room, but there is nothing that is explicitly stated to make this clear. In the letter to the church in Philadelphia, those who overcome will be made pillars in the temple of God (Rev. 3:12). The earthly temple is referred to twice in Rev. 11:1,2.

⁸⁶ Although we have taken the viewpoint that the temple *equals* the throne-room, it is possible that the temple *contains* the throne-room. However, either position is compatible with our arguments.

⁸⁷ See Bauckham (1993) pp. 70-83.

⁸⁸ Schüssler Fiorenza (1993) pg. 29. It is interesting in the light of the above quote that she later goes on to state that, 'John describes heaven not so much as a temple but as an oriental or Roman sovereign's throne hall. God reigns like an Oriental or Hellenistic ruler in the splendor of unapproachable light surrounded by the highest beings of the celestial court' (pg. 59). It would be our opinion that the balance is actually tipped the other way.

C. Hymnic Material.

1. The Concept of Heavenly Praise.

Songs of praise and worship abounded in the religious world of ancient Israel and this was especially true, as we have already mentioned in our last section, within the context of the temple. The person, attributes and actions of YHWH served to provide much of the contents of these compositions. 'The most exuberant, extensive, and expansive indicators of who and what God is and is about, are found and elaborated in the hymns and songs of thanksgiving which the people of Israel and individuals in that community uttered again and again in the course of Israel's history.'⁸⁹ The belief that this worship and praise of God also extended to the heavenly realm was a common idea within early Jewish and Christian literature. So, in the Old Testament and Apocrypha there are exhortations for heaven and its contents to praise the LORD (Pss. 29:1; 69:34; 97:6; 103:20ff.; 148:2; Isa. 44:23; 49:13; Azar. 1:37).⁹⁰ This portrayal of praise echoing to the heavenly rafters is a recurring theme throughout Jewish and Christian writings. Various members of the heavenly entourage participate. Thus angels do so, as individuals,⁹¹ described as armed troops,⁹² and generally as a celestial choir.⁹³ So also do the Living Creatures,⁹⁴ the Cherubim,⁹⁵ and the Seraphim.⁹⁶ Even the righteous dead⁹⁷ and particularly the seer, himself, can engage in the heavenly song.⁹⁸

2. Actual Recorded Hymns.

Even though, as we have just noted, there are numerous sources which refer to singing and praise taking place in the heavenly throne-room, the record of the actual contents of these hymns is rather more sparse. This is particularly well highlighted by the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* discovered at Qumran. 'Although one reads over and over again that the angels offer praise to God, not once does our text divulge the content of their praise. That is, not once does the reader learn exactly what it is that the angels say.'⁹⁹

Within the Old Testament canon, the only example is found in Isaiah's vision where the seraphs call one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." (Isa. 6:3). The pseudepigraphon, the Ladder of Jacob, records a hymn sung by Jacob in the presence of God which gives a description of the throne-room scene (LadJac. 2:6-22). The Apocalypse of Abraham (ApAbr. 17:8-21) contains a long hymn which the angel Iael and Abraham recite while approaching the throne of God. This hymn is similar to later angelic songs of praise found in Jewish *Hekhalot* literature.¹⁰⁰

⁸⁹ Millar (1985) pg. 5.

⁹⁰ There is an interesting verse in Zephaniah (Zeph. 3:17), where the prophet envisages, in a future day, God reciprocating the people's praise by singing over Israel.

⁹¹ 1En. 40:3ff; ApAbr. 17:7.

⁹² 2En. 17:1; 18:9; 20:4; GBart. Fol. 6a.

⁹³ ApZeph. A; TLevi 3:8; GLAE 7:2; 17:1; 22:3; LLAE 33:1 AscIsa. 9:29, 42; ApPaul 14; Gos. Eg. 59.5-11; Ap. Jas. 14.26-28; 15.17-22; Disc. 8-9 58.19-20; 59.30-31; b. Hag. 12b.

⁹⁴ ApAbr. 18:8

⁹⁵ TIsaac 7:1; TAdam 1:9; 2:6

⁹⁶ TAdam 1:4; GBart. Fol. 5b; Fol. 9a; Cf. *OnOrgWld.* 150.16-19.

⁹⁷ AscIsa. 9:28, 41.

⁹⁸ 1En. 71:11ff; ApAbr. 18:1; AscIsa. 9:28, 31; *Allogenes* 58.35-38; Ap. Jas. 15.22-23; Disc. 8-9 60.8; *Hek. Rab.* §106, §251.

⁹⁹ Allison (1988) pg. 189. See this article for a discussion of the reasons behind this lack of angelic songs. Also Maier (1992) [pg. 553] suggests that 'after the separation of the Qumran community from the temple cult of Jerusalem it needed substitutes for the real sabbath offerings, and offered as substitutes the Songs, in solemn form describing and in a certain sense also staging and participating in the performance of the corresponding ritual in the heavenly sanctuary.'

¹⁰⁰ See especially the songs for ascent in *Hekhalot Rabbati* and *Ma'aseh Merkavah*. For a discussion of the use of these *hekhalot* compositions, see Grözinger (1980). The employment of songs of ascent was also recognised by the Sethian Gnostics. One of their works, *Steles Seth*, primarily comprises three doxological hymns which, in a ritual context, aided the ascent of the members of their worshipping community. See Goehring (1996) pg. 380ff..

3. Hymns in the Apocalypse.

The large volume of hymnic compositions found in the Apocalypse, when compared with other throne visions, is worth highlighting. No other work contains such a wealth of material. The forms these paeans take throughout the book include those of acclamations, victory odes, exhortation, homilies, prayers, blessings, and doxologies. That there is such a profusion of hymnic material found in Revelation demonstrates the author's literary skills also embraced the lyrical realm. These compositions¹⁰¹ perform a very important role, not only within chapters 4 and 5, but also throughout the entire book.¹⁰² They all appear to have been uttered within the confines of the throne-room. Their computation depends on the process of identification employed, however it is legitimate to suggest that there would appear to be sixteen such compositions¹⁰³ throughout the book (five of which occur in the inaugural vision): Rev. 4:8c; 4:11; 5:9b-10; 5:12b; 5:13b; 7:10b; 7:12; 11:15b; 11:17-18; 12:10b-12; 15:3b-4; 16:5b-7b; 19:1b-2; 19:3; 19:5b; 19:6b-8.¹⁰⁴ We will discover that as usual John is influenced by and makes use of earlier Jewish traditional works. However he also has the liberty and innovation to mould them into his own style and to augment them with his own unique craftsmanship.

4. Their Source and Setting.

Various theories have been forwarded as to the source and background of the hymns which are found throughout the Book of Revelation.¹⁰⁵ Many commentators have tried to argue with various degrees of success for a background in the cultic praxis of the fledgling church.¹⁰⁶ In an early work, M. Dibelius¹⁰⁷ suggests that the hymns were derived from the church's liturgy in the early Church. This position has also been held by more recent scholars as they conclude that the hymns reflect the liturgy or worship of the early church.¹⁰⁸ Some have been more specific by suggesting an eucharistic influence.¹⁰⁹ However J. P. M. Sweet¹¹⁰ counters that the early church influence 'cannot be substantiated, since the only evidence is from later liturgies which are themselves influenced by the NT writings. But we are on firmer ground with the worship of the synagogue, in which John and many other Christians would have first heard the scriptures read and expounded.' In this vein, L. Mowry¹¹¹ and P. Prigent,¹¹² among others, have suggested a synagogal influence on Rev. 4 and 5 in particular. However this position is also difficult to sustain, not least because it is virtually impossible to trace with any certainty the roots of any particular liturgy. Even in much later material, it is still very difficult to trace the ethnic backgrounds of particular parts. Thus, of the 'lesser doxology' W. Werner states that it 'is no homogeneous entity but is the manifestation of an extremely complex historical development.'¹¹³

¹⁰¹ See Jöns (1971) for a comprehensive study of their background, function and structure.

¹⁰² Sweet (1979) [pg. 6] proposes that 'throughout the book the heavenly hymns serve to interpret the visions.'

¹⁰³ In Rev. 14:3 there is mention of a 'new song' sung by the hundred and forty-four thousand, but its content is not divulged.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Jöns (1971) pg. 19. Aune (1997) [pg. 315] observes that, with the exception of the hymn in 15:3b-4 (the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb), the rest are arranged in seven antiphonal units.

¹⁰⁵ For recent summary of the various views, see Guthrie (1992) pp. 70-73. See also Carnegie (1982) pp. 243-245.

¹⁰⁶ See Martin (1989) for a discussion on some models of liturgical practices within the New Testament churches.

¹⁰⁷ Dibelius (1931) pg. 220.

¹⁰⁸ Dix (1945) pg. 28; Piper (1951) pp. 10-22; Kroll (1968) pg. 16f; O'Rourke (1968) pg. 409 [with some Jewish influence]; Thompson (1969) pp. 342, 350.

¹⁰⁹ Cabaniss (1953) pp. 74-86; Stanley (1958) pg. 182; Caird (1966) pp. 288, 301; Barr (1984) pg. 46; Läuchli (1960) pp. 359-378. For *contra* this position, see Taylor (1941) pp. 48-61; Moule (1961) pg. 64; Carnegie (1982) pp. 243-245.

¹¹⁰ Sweet (1979) pg. 41.

¹¹¹ Mowry (1952) pp. 79, 83.

¹¹² Prigent (1964) pp. 46-76.

¹¹³ Werner (1945-46) pg. 276.

A more plausible and perhaps sustainable hypothesis is that the hymnic sections are literary compositions of the author.¹¹⁴ K. -P. Jörens¹¹⁵ has been particularly influential in the promotion of this position. D. Carnegie¹¹⁶ has built on this earlier study. He focuses on two main areas to argue that the hymns are composed by John himself. Firstly, the vocabulary of the hymns: 'Not only does the same vocabulary recur in different hymns but...the vocabulary and style are the same as that for the rest of the book.' Secondly, their context: 'Unlike other New Testament hymns which show signs of being interpolated, those in Revelation are intimately connected with their context. They can therefore hardly have had independent standing or have ever been sung in Christian worship.'

One final point on this subject is appropriate before we move on. It will become very obvious that the source for the prose portions of his book is firmly rooted in Jewish traditional material, especially the Hebrew Bible, which John has moulded for his own particular purposes. So perhaps there is also no need to look far beyond a Semitic background for the hymnic material which John uses, and applies his own poetic flair to make his very own. Thus his first choice of hymn, being an adaptation of Isaiah's trisagion, would appear to be his initial pointer in the direction of his sources and his intentions.

D. The Rebuttal of a Graeco-Roman Influence.

1. Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial.

In this section we will consider whether there has been a major Graeco-Roman influence on the throne-room scene in Revelation chapters 4 & 5,¹¹⁷ or whether it is rather that the overwhelming influence on the writer of the Apocalypse in his description of the throne-room is rooted in the Jewish traditional background. It will be argued that the latter is correct and that there is negligible influence from the contemporary Roman imperial court ceremonial. John's message within his book is most certainly a contemporary one¹¹⁸ as he writes to his audience within the seven churches of Asia and beyond. However John considered the Roman imperial system as the complete antithesis of God's sovereign rule. In this light, any influence of the imperial court in the heavenly realm, which was regarded by John as being the perfect paradigm, would be totally out of place.

To demonstrate that motifs and images incorporated by John in the heavenly throne-scene derive from a Graeco-Roman background, one would have to show positively that they appear in this milieu and negatively that they appear only there and are not found in earlier Jewish traditional material. Therefore our task of rebuttal will involve explaining the similarities to these influences by showing that they already existed in the Israelite-Jewish tradition, and also we shall seek to highlight characteristics of the throne-vision which cannot be explained by the influence of Graeco-Roman factors.

In recent years D. E. Aune has been at the forefront with his argument that 'John's description of the heavenly ceremonial practiced in the throne room of God bears such a striking resemblance to the ceremonial of the imperial court and cult that the latter can only be a parody of the former.'¹¹⁹ Therefore we shall use his article to investigate and critique this thesis.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ So Kiddle (1940) pg. 66; Delling (1959) pp. 134ff.; Deichgräber (1967) pp. 58ff also 178ff.; Thompson (1969) pg. 349.

¹¹⁵ Jörens (1971) [pg. 178] has stated that, 'die hymnischen Stücke der Apc sowohl in ihrer jetzigen Gestalt als auch in ihrer Stellung im Aufbau der Apc vom Verfasser der Apokalypse selbst stammen.'

¹¹⁶ Carnegie (1982) pp. 246-248.

¹¹⁷ The main focus of our attention will be on the inaugural throne-room vision found in these two chapters. However much of what is discussed will also apply to the rest of the visions which continue through the book of Revelation.

¹¹⁸ We do not imply by this that his message was *only* relevant to his day. However this was certainly one aspect of it because it was a real letter with a clear purpose.

¹¹⁹ Aune (1983) pg. 5. He concludes in page 22 of his article 'that John's depiction of the ceremonial in the heavenly throne room has been significantly influenced in its conceptualization by popular images of Roman imperial court ceremonial.'

a. Background Issues.

In his introduction he offers five solutions to 'the problem of how a provincial resident of the eastern Mediterranean world could possibly know enough about the ceremonial of the imperial court to use it as a model for the ceremonial of the heavenly throne room.'¹²¹ It will be argued that these solutions are inadequate. Firstly he states that 'the Roman emperors were not anchored to the city of Rome, but often visited cities in the Italian peninsula and various provincial cities, though our knowledge of their travels is limited for the earlier period. Where they went their court went with them, so that citizens of various areas, particularly those of the upper classes, were exposed to imperial ceremonial, particularly that of the *adventus*, i.e., the "arrival" of the emperor at a particular city.'¹²² However S. R. F Price states that 'in Asia Minor there were ceremonies to greet emperors who visited provincial cities, but they were rarely called for; no emperor visited the area in the whole of the first century A.D.'¹²³

Secondly, Aune writes that 'the main task of the Roman emperor was to dispense justice through reading written petitions, hearing cases orally, and receiving embassies from various cities. Firsthand exposure to the Imperial court was therefore, over the years, experienced by hundreds and thousands of provincial residents.'¹²⁴ It is difficult to envisage John being a member of these royal audiences and receiving firsthand exposure to the court, but it is perhaps possible that second-hand information may have been available if John had come in contact with such people or through their experiences it had become common knowledge.

Thirdly and fourthly Aune points out that 'popular images of the imperial court and the protocol required there circulated in such literature as the Acts of the Pagan Martyrs (*Acta Alexandrinorum*)' and 'the ideology of the Roman divine monarchy was expressed in both Greek and Latin panegyric and in the rhetorical works of the Second Sophistic.'¹²⁵ However, even if John would have been predisposed to read such literature, it is questionable if this material would have been available to and influenced John, not least because most if not all of these works date from after the time that Revelation was written.¹²⁶

Aune's fifth point is that 'Roman art and coinage were vehicles for imperial propaganda, and can be used to understand when and where particular images and conceptions were popular.'¹²⁷ However, it is debatable about how much actual detail of the imperial court and cult can be conveyed by coinage in the time period relating to John's lifetime.

¹²⁰ The article will be used as it provides a handy structure. However reference will be made where necessary to his commentary on Revelation [Aune (1997)]. In it he has, at times, added other examples in an attempt to forward his cause, but many of them are obviously unrelated or potentially could not have had any real bearing on John's book. Thus the essence of our arguments here, which show that there is ample scope for the Jewish traditional material to have been his overwhelming influence, still stands.

¹²¹ *ibid.* pg. 6.

¹²² *ibid.* pg. 6.

¹²³ Price (1984) pg. 1.

¹²⁴ Aune (1983) pg. 6.

¹²⁵ *ibid.* (1983) pg. 6.

¹²⁶ In his footnote 5, [pg. 23] Aune himself admits that the 'earliest panegyric, written to the emperor Trajan, is that of Pliny the Younger, written and presented in the Roman senate in C. E. 100. A manual of how to write panegyric is preserved in the *Peri Epideiktikon* in the late second/early third century rhetorician Menander.' The work known as the *Second Sophistic* emerged after Revelation had been written, see Anderson (1993). It is also very doubtful that John would have read Latin. Sutherland (1959) [pg. 50] quoting Prof. A. H. M. Jones writes 'Latin legends meant nothing to the eastern half of the empire, where anyone who was literate could read Greek only.' NB. Although Sutherland proceeds to critique the overall quotation of which the above is a section, he concurs with this particular point. See pp. 52-53.

¹²⁷ This may be true and he cites the article by Sutherland (1959) but there is nothing to suggest that any images or motifs of the imperial throne-room were employed.

b. Section II of the Article.

In section II of his paper, Aune cites three general similarities that God has in Revelation 4 & 5 with the Roman emperor and he suggests that these 'parallels do provide a general context in which John's vision of the throne room ceremonial can be understood.'¹²⁸ However these general similarities - God is essentially passive, dispenses justice, and holds a *biblion* in his right hand - can easily be traced back to much earlier Jewish tradition. Firstly, Aune suggests the role of the emperor was passive¹²⁹ and that 'most of the contacts which he had with his subjects was of the "petition-and-response"¹³⁰ variety.'¹³¹ However the portrayal of God¹³² in the Apocalypse is essentially very similar to that recorded in the Old Testament throne-room scenes. Secondly he notes that the primary role of God of dispensing justice reflects that of the Roman emperor from the time of Julius Caesar.¹³³ That may well be true, but this function also fits well with much earlier Jewish tradition. So in 1Kgs. 7:7 Solomon incorporated in his palace 'the Hall of the Throne where he was to pronounce judgment, the Hall of Justice.' In the Psalms God is often characterized as administering justice.¹³⁴ Also in the main throne-room scenes in the Old Testament justice and judgment are major themes (Exod. 24:12; 1Kgs. 19:23; Isa. 6:9-13; Ezek. 2:3-10; and especially Dan. 7:10). Thirdly, Aune writes, 'just as the princeps is depicted in Roman art surrounded by his council and holding a *libellus* i.e., a petition or letter in the form of an open scroll, so God is seen to be holding a *biblion* in his right hand (Rev. 5:1).'¹³⁵ This particular motif can be found much earlier in Ezekiel 2:9, 10 where the prophet is presented with a scroll from the hand of God, and 'it had writing on the front and on the back.'¹³⁶ In the context of Rev. 1:5 the scroll most probably is best understood as containing details of the destiny of the world and the people of God as it unfolds in the subsequent visions. Comparable books are alluded to in Dan.12:9; 4Ezra 6:20; and Jub. 5:13, 23:32.

c. Section III of the Article.

In the third section of his paper Aune uses the number of the elders, twenty-four, to introduce the subject of cosmic symbolism. In his argument he proffers two possible instances of Roman imperial influence on the Apocalypse: i) He mentions the cosmic symbolism of circular structures and with reference to the Golden House of Nero he relates this to the circular configuration of the heavenly throne-room. ii) He suggests that Demetrius Poliorcetes, the son of Antigonos, Herod Agrippa I, Claudius, and Nero - with their glorious apparel¹³⁷ - have some association with four passages in Revelation (Rev. 1:12-16a; 1:16b; Rev. 21:23; Rev. 22:5).

¹²⁸ Aune (1983) pg. 9.

¹²⁹ God's role is not totally passive in the Apocalypse. He gives John the revelation of Jesus Christ, through an angel (Rev. 1:1), he sends out the seven spirits of God (Rev. 5:6), and as Aune notes he speaks in Rev. 21:5-8. See also the later discussion on the final vision where various attributes are ascribed to the One on the throne.

¹³⁰ It is interesting to note that in the specific throne-room scene relating to Solomon (1Kgs. 2:19-20) Bathsheba comes to make 'one small request' and later also in 1Kgs. 3:16 two prostitutes come in and stand before him to make a ruling on the maternal identity of the surviving child.

¹³¹ *ibid.* pg. 9

¹³² Aune states that God is not described (pg. 9) but this is not strictly correct because in Rev. 4:3 he is generally depicted as looking like jasper and carnelian.

¹³³ *ibid.* pp. 8 & 9.

¹³⁴ Pss. 7:7,8; 9:4,7; 11:4,5; 50:6; 75:7; 76:8; 82:1.

¹³⁵ *ibid.* pg. 9. See also Aune (1997) pp. 338ff.

¹³⁶ It should also be noted that in Deut. 17:18-19 the enthroned king of Israel was to be given a copy of the law which he was to keep for the rest of his life.

¹³⁷ In page 11, using various sources, Aune suggests that Demetrius Poliorcetes is described as having worn a garment with golden stars and the twelve signs of the Zodiac; Herod Agrippa I was clothed in a silver garment which reflected the sun in a dazzling manner; Nero was represented by some golden statues as Apollo-Helios, and he wore a Greek coat adorned with golden stars; Claudius wore a golden robe.

i) Circular Structures.

Aune perceives the participants in the throne-room forming concentric circles around the throne and later he mentions that Nero's Golden house was a revolving rotunda. He states that 'the cosmic symbolism inherent in circular constructions is well-known.'¹³⁸ This may well be correct. However, although the throne-scene is popularly depicted and considered as being circular in formation, it is certainly not explicitly ever described as such. Terms such as 'around the throne' (Rev. 4:4,6), 'surrounding the throne' (Rev. 5:11), 'on each side of the throne' (Rev. 4:6) are used, but these phrases do not necessarily intrinsically imply a circular configuration.¹³⁹ The arrangement of *four* living creatures on each side of the throne expanding out to twenty-four (4x6) elders would rather suggest a quadrilateral shape.¹⁴⁰ It should also be noted that the Old Testament depiction of the Tabernacle (and the arrangement of the tribes around it) and the Temple was that of rectangular constructions,¹⁴¹ and of course both of these were very influential on John's composition of the throne-room.¹⁴²

ii) Glorious Garments.

After referring to the majestic robes of various Roman emperors he makes comparisons and connections with four passages. These are: (a) Rev. 1:12-16a "one like a son of man" with a golden girdle with seven stars in his right hand.' (b) Rev. 1:16b 'his face was like the sun shining in full strength.' (c) Rev. 21:23 'And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.' (d) Rev. 22:5 'And the night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.' We will now consider each of these in turn to discover that their existence has nothing to do with a Roman imperial influence but rather reflects an Old Testament background.

(a) In Rev. 1:12,16 there is the description of "one like the Son of Man clothed in a long robe with a golden sash across his chest."¹⁴³ This is a clear description of priestly attire¹⁴⁴ described in Exod. 28:4, and which is used in Dan. 10:5,¹⁴⁵ 'a man clothed in linen, with a belt of gold from Uphaz around his waist.' This theme is picked up again by John in Rev. 15:5,6 where in the context of the 'temple of the tent of witness' the seven angels are 'robed in pure bright linen'¹⁴⁶ with golden sashes across their chests.'

¹³⁸ *ibid.* pg. 10. He cites H. P. L'Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World*. (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co, 1953) as his authority.

¹³⁹ See Aune (1997) pg. 314.

¹⁴⁰ NB. The New Jerusalem described in Rev. 21:9-27 is most definitely cubical in form.

¹⁴¹ In fact, the interior of the inner sanctuary was cuboid in shape. In IKgs. 6:20 we read, 'the interior of the inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high.' Gressmann (1928) [pg. 59] 'thought that the cuboid shape of the inner sanctuary was intended as a miniature representation of heaven.' Cf. *AposCon* 7.35.5 'Heaven knows the one who raised it as a vault upon nothing, like a stone cube.' Also, Rev. 7:1; 20:8 refers to 'the four corners of the earth', cf. Isa. 11:12; Ezek. 7:2.

¹⁴² So, there is the altar (6:9; 8:3,5; 9:13; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7 cf. Exod. 27:1); 'the seven flaming torches' (4:5 cf. Exod. 25:37); the cherubim (4:6 cf. Exod. 25:18); the ark of the covenant (11:19 cf. Exod. 25:21); and 'the sea of glass' which is perhaps an echo of the laver in Solomon's temple (4:6. Exod. 30:18 cf. 1Kgs. 7:30). The temple (Rev. 7:15; 11:19; 14:15,17; 15:6,8; 16:1,17) and tent of witness (Rev. 15:5,6) are linked directly to the heavenly throne-room. See also Isa. 6:1; Pss. 11:4; 18:6; Hab. 2:20; Mic. 1:2; and TLevi. 18:6 where there is a close association of the temple with the heavenly scene.

¹⁴³ See also Aune (1997) pp. 93-94.

¹⁴⁴ There may also be kingly connotations, however the location of being 'in the midst of the lampstands' (Rev. 1:3) would indicate a priestly context as would the background of Rev. 15:5,6.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Ezek. 9:2; Zech. 3:5; Wisd. 18:24; Sir. 45:8.

¹⁴⁶ For a discussion on the textual problem of the angel's apparel i.e. λίθον ("stone") instead of λίνον ("linen"), see Beale (1999) pp. 804-805.

(b) Rev. 1:16c reads 'his face was like the sun shining with full force.'¹⁴⁷ The notion of an individual's face shining is closely associated with the presence of the glory of God in the Old Testament. Thus a human, an angelic and a divine face can possess this characteristic.¹⁴⁸

(c) & (d) The quotations from Rev. 21: 23 and 22:5 will be considered together as they possess a common source. The precursor of these texts is found in Isa. 60:19,¹⁴⁹ 'The sun shall no more go down, or your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light.' The verses which follow Rev. 21:23 continue to reflect Isaiah 60 (so for Rev. 21:24 see Isa. 60:3,5, for Rev. 21:25-26 see Isa. 60:11).¹⁵⁰

iii) Cosmic Symbolism.

In making reference to the *seven* flaming torches before the throne (Rev. 4:5),¹⁵¹ and the twenty-four (the doubling of the number *twelve*) elders, Aune is correct to highlight the great importance of the symbolic use of numbers in Revelation.¹⁵² This figurative use of numbers was commonplace in the Old Testament and in other Jewish literature.

In his initial paragraph of this section Aune writes, 'I am convinced that attempts to "identify" the twenty-four elders, while understandable, are misguided. The elders, I think, have no separate "identity" or "meaning".... The number twenty four can be regarded, I think, as a symbol of cosmic kingship without suggesting any more specific intention than the doubling of the number twelve.'¹⁵³ This view is one of the much less likely ones among a large group of suggestions.¹⁵⁴ In Revelation, 'twelve is the number of the people of God (Rev. 7:4-8; 12:1; 14:1; 21:12, 14) squared for completeness, multiplied by a thousand to suggest vast numbers (Rev. 7:4-8; 14:1; 21:17).'¹⁵⁵ The Old Testament antecedent of this is found in the twelve tribes of Israel.¹⁵⁶ In general, the number 'seven' signifies in the Old Testament and Revelation the sense of fullness or completeness.¹⁵⁷ In particular, with the seven flaming torches (Rev. 4:5; cf. 1:16, 20; 5:6), John is developing the imagery of the seven lamps which burned before the Lord (Exod. 25:37; 37:23; 40:25; Num. 8:2) and Zechariah's seven-branched candelabrum (Zech. 4:2, 10) which are the seven 'eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth.' Lastly, one does not have to rely on Graeco-Roman notions for the source of aspects of cosmic symbolism. They were all in the Jewish tradition.¹⁵⁸ We have already mentioned the Old Testament and Jewish derivation of symbolic numbers. Josephus (*Ant.* 3. 179-87) has an extensive explanation of the cosmic symbolism of the Israelite priestly vestments and ritual objects within the Tabernacle/Temple. He is probably drawing on Jerusalem priestly traditions which he knew at first hand as himself a Jerusalem priestly aristocrat. The Jews did themselves, then, sometimes associate the twelve tribes with the signs of the zodiac. And for

¹⁴⁷ See Aune (197) pg. 99.

¹⁴⁸ See Exod. 34:29,30,35; Num. 6:25; Pss. 31:16, 80:1,3,7,19, 119:135; Isa. 60:1; Dan. 9:17. This concept is continued into the New Testament, see Mat. 17:2; 2Cor. 4:6. It should be noted that there is a greater degree of resemblance here in Rev. 1:16c - see Bauckham, (1993) nt. 17 pg. 253.

¹⁴⁹ Isa. 24:23 is also closely related. It reads, 'Then the moon will be abashed, and the sun ashamed; for the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his elders he will manifest his glory.'

¹⁵⁰ On this topic, see Beale (1999) pp. 1093-1101, 1115-1117.

¹⁵¹ See Aune (1997) pp. 295ff.

¹⁵² The most significant numbers in Revelation are seven, four, three and twelve (and sometimes multiples of these). See Bauckham (1993) chaps. 1 & 11, for John's use of numbers, and particularly the method of interpretation known as gematria. Cf. Yarbro-Collins (1984) pp. 1221-1287 (esp. 1268-1284), and also Yarbro-Collins (1996) pp. 114-134.

¹⁵³ Aune (1983) pg. 10.

¹⁵⁴ See, most recently, Beale (1999) pp. 322-326.

¹⁵⁵ Bauckham (1993) pg. 36.

¹⁵⁶ This is reflected in the New Testament with the commissioning of twelve apostles.

¹⁵⁷ So, for example in Gen. 1 there are seven days of creation. In Lev. 4:6,17 the priest sprinkles blood seven times in front of the curtain of the sanctuary, and in Lev. 8:11 in front of the altar. There is a sevenfold vengeance mentioned in Gen. 4:15,24, Ps. 79:12, and in Lev. 26:18,21,24,28 a sevenfold punishment.

¹⁵⁸ Malina (1995) has a very extreme and implausible development of this, where he has most of the Apocalypse reflecting astral phenomena (e.g. the Lion and Lamb as signs of the zodiac). See Bauckham (2000) pp. 432-433 for a critical review of this book.

Jewish writers cosmic symbolism naturally went with ideas about the Temple. Since God's throne-room is imaged as above the firmament (sky), it naturally has cosmic (heavenly) qualities. Heavenly beings are always bright and shining ('like stars,' 'like the sun,' 'like bronze or precious stones,' 'shining white like snow') because the heavenly bodies that we can see in the sky have such characteristics.

d. Section IV of the Article.

In section 4, Aune looks more closely at the description and the activities of the twenty-four elders. The discussion revolves around their white apparel, their golden crowns, their number, and their actions of casting down their crowns and prostrating themselves before God's throne.¹⁵⁹ Firstly he asserts that 'the imagery of twenty-four elders clothed in white with crowns on their heads would suggest, above all, the appropriate ritual apparel for worship to a Greek audience.'¹⁶⁰ However the colour 'white' and especially the idea of being attired in white, has a long heritage in the Jewish past as being associated with holiness and purity.¹⁶¹ It is worth noting here that the elders, rather than being the recipients of worship, are the perpetrators.

Aune suggests that 'the heavenly scene of the twenty-four elders throwing down their crowns before the throne has no parallel in Israelite-Jewish literature and becomes comprehensible only in the light of the ceremonial traditions of Hellenistic and Roman ruler worship.'¹⁶² To support this conclusion Aune cites various Hellenistic and Roman ceremonies involving coronation or the presenting of crowns.¹⁶³ However these ceremonies simply refer to the *presentation* of crowns to dignitaries. This ritual extends way back in Jewish history. So during the rustic monarchy of David, he is presented with Saul's crown by an Amalekite (2Sam. 1:10) and the crown of gold of Milcon is placed on his head (2Sam. 12:30, 1Chron. 20:2).¹⁶⁴ In the SoS 3:11 Solomon is presented with a wedding crown. In the later Maccabean dynasty, Simon sent a gold crown to King Demetrius (1Macc.13:36), and Alcimus, a former high priest presented a golden crown to him (2Macc. 14:4). In the Letter of Jeremiah (6:9) the people make golden crowns for the heads of their gods. Additionally, in the Revelation throne scene the crowns belonged to and were worn by the elders. This was not the case in these presentations where the crowns were different from those that the envoys were wearing. Also the significance of the act of the laying down of the crowns in Rev. 4 is that it is a kind of surrender of their sovereignty to God by acknowledging that it is really his. None of the examples given by Aune displays such a nuance i.e. subordinate rulers showing their allegiance by laying their crowns before their overlord.¹⁶⁵

The twenty-four elders should be looked at holistically. Within the context of the heavenly throne-room (which also has very close affiliations with the heavenly temple), they are associated with white garments, worship, harps and singing, bowls of incense (i.e. the prayers of the saints), and being intercessors and interpreters of God's will. Therefore, although they sit

¹⁵⁹ See also Aune (1997) pp. 287ff. and pp. 292ff.

¹⁶⁰ Aune (1983) pg. 12.

¹⁶¹ See Ps. 51:7; Isa. 1:18, Dan. 11:35, and particularly, for white garments, Eccl. 9:8; Dan. 7:9; 2Esd. 2:39,40; 2 Mac. 11:8. In the ancient world, pure white was actually a very rare quality in nature and in human artefacts. The characteristic of shining white was also considered the colour of resplendent heavenly beings: 1En. 14:20ff; 3En. 12:1-5; cf. Ps. 104:2. In *Gen.R.* 3.4 one of the variant readings of this text, when commenting on this verse in the Psalms, refers to God as wrapping himself in a white garment.

¹⁶² *ibid.* pg. 13.

¹⁶³ See page 13 for details. It should be noted that his examples include those which are much later than the terminus ad quem of the writing of Revelation. So, for instance, he quotes from S. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremonies in Late Antiquity*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1981. pg. 59 which refers to the 4th century A.D. and also to an incident in the 3rd century A.D. with the emperor Maximinus (*Herodian* 8. 7. 2; LCL trans.).

¹⁶⁴ See also Ps. 21:3. In 2Kgs. 11:12 [2Chron. 23:11] Joash is crowned. In Est. 2:17 & 8:15 both Esther and Mordecai are crowned.

¹⁶⁵ In Aune (1997) pg. 308 he refers to Tacitus *Annals* 15.29 which tells of Tiridates laying a crown in front of a bust of Nero, but this isn't really very close to the performance witnessed in Rev. 4.

on thrones and wear crowns, it will be argued later that their actions and appearances have a far greater priestly than monarchical influence.¹⁶⁶ Hence their crowns¹⁶⁷ are closely linked with the priestly headwear, and any regal authority they did possess was deliberately forfeited by their actions of rising from their thrones, casting down their crowns and worshipping. So, any apparent Graeco-Roman imperial court influence can be deemed insignificant.

Aune then notes a numerical parallel between the number of elders and the lictors of Domitian.¹⁶⁸ However the standard explanations of this number are far more plausible¹⁶⁹ and it could also be easily argued, for example, that the number 'twenty-four' has an affinity rather with the concept of continuous worship¹⁷⁰ and the twenty-four hours in one day.¹⁷¹

Next, Aune writes 'the practice of the ritual of *proskynesis* before early Roman emperors is incontrovertible.'¹⁷² In all probability this is correct, however as he himself admits, this practice originated much earlier in ancient eastern oriental monarchies. So in the Old Testament, there is mention of prostration to images and idols,¹⁷³ gods,¹⁷⁴ dignitaries,¹⁷⁵ kings,¹⁷⁶ and the LORD.¹⁷⁷ He then alludes to an apparent Roman practice of bowing before an empty throne in the time of Gaius and Julius Caesar. However the heavenly worship of the elders is always directed towards the throne on which God and/or the Lamb are enthroned.¹⁷⁸

e. Section V of the Article.

In his fifth section Aune broaches the subject of the hymnic material¹⁷⁹ in the Apocalypse.¹⁸⁰ At the outset he notes that these compositions are often positioned together in an antiphonal arrangement - this of course was characteristic of the worship within the Israelite- Jewish cult.¹⁸¹ On page 16 he states that in 'the *Res Gestae Divi Augustae* 10, we read (LCL trans.): By decree of the senate my name was included in the Salian hymn.' However this does not refer to a hymn actually sung to the emperor in praise. He also mentions acclamations of Gaius, Germanicus, the adopted son of Augustus, of Nero, Caracalla, and Herod Agrippa I (pg. 14-17), but there is no detail given to relate these to the Apocalypse. He correctly admits 'that hymns were integral features of the cults of all ancient Mediterranean religions,¹⁸² and we would

¹⁶⁶ They will be looked at in detail in chapter III, 'Worship of the Heavenly Sovereign.'

¹⁶⁷ For a recent article on background of golden crown imagery in Revelation, see Stevenson (1995) pp. 257-272 where he investigates the four different concepts of victory, royalty, divine glory, and honour, and discusses various references to crowns that are found within Revelation in the context of these four features.

¹⁶⁸ See also (Aune (1997) pg. 292.

¹⁶⁹ See note 21 above.

¹⁷⁰ Although it is the living creatures who are specifically described as singing day and night without ceasing (Rev. 4:8), whenever they do praise God, the elders perform in unison (Rev. 4:9-10).

¹⁷¹ See the Testament of Adam, chapter 1 & 2 - The Horarium. Roloff (1993) [pg. 70] comments that, 'the number twenty-four is most easily explained as a reference to the number of hours in a day; accordingly, the elders represent before God the fullness of time and their purpose is to praise God ceaselessly, day and night.'

¹⁷² *ibid.* pg. 13.

¹⁷³ Exod. 20:4,5,24; Lev. 26:1; Deut. 5:9; Josh. 23:7,16; 1Kgs. 19:18; 2Kgs. 17:35; Dan. 3:5,6,10,11,15.

¹⁷⁴ Num. 25:2; Judg. 2:12,17,19; 1Kgs. 18:18; 2Kgs. 17:35; 2Chron. 25:14; Isa. 46:6.

¹⁷⁵ Gen. 42:6; 43:26; Exod. 11:8; 1Sam. 28:14; 2Kgs. 2:15; 4:37.

¹⁷⁶ 2Sam. 9:8; 14:22,33; 24:20; 1Kgs. 1:16,23,31; 2:19.

¹⁷⁷ Exod. 4:31; 12:27; 24:8; Deut. 9:18,25; 1Chron. 29:20; 2Chron. 7:3; Neh. 8:6; 29:29; Pss. 22:29; 72:11; 95:6; Isa. 49:7; Mic. 6:6.

¹⁷⁸ See Rev. 4:10; 5:8; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4.

¹⁷⁹ Although there is a large amount of hymnic material, there are probably only three actual hymns referred to in the Apocalypse: a) Rev. 5:9-10 a new song (recorded). b) Rev. 14:3 a new song (not recorded). c) Rev. 15:3 the song of Moses and the Lamb (recorded). Each of these is sung (the verb *ᾄδω* is used, in all the other 'hymnic material' recorded the less specific verb *λέγω* is used) with the accompaniment of the harp. This is very typical of Old Testament hymns, especially 'new songs' Pss. 33:3; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1. This would anchor the influence of these hymns in the Jewish past. See also Pss. 40:3; 96:1; Isa. 42:10; Jdt. 16:13 for the expression of a 'new song'.

¹⁸⁰ See also Aune (1997) pp. 316ff.

¹⁸¹ See Ezra 3:10, 11; Neh. 12:31; Pss. 24; 91; 115; 118; 121; 136; Isa. 6:3; cf. 4Q403 fig. 1.2 14-15. In Philo (*Vit. cont.* 11), there is a reference to early Jewish antiphonal singing. See Deichgräber (1967) pp. 46ff. for various references to antiphonal singing in rabbinic literature.

¹⁸² *ibid.* pg. 15.

suggest the form, structure and content of the hymns and hymnic material of Revelation nestle most comfortably within the ancient Jewish worship system. His main focus in this section (pp. 17-20) is that these hymns were sung by a large choir. So, he writes, 'The studied way in which the author attributes these hymns and acclamations to vast throngs of beings suggests that they should be understood in relation to the ancient *argumentum e consensu omnium*, i.e., the argument from universal agreement (or, the "forty-million Frenchmen cannot be wrong" argument).'¹⁸³ He then continues to correlate this concept with Roman imperialism. However in the Old Testament the term 'LORD of Hosts' (יהוה צבאות) is ascribed to God around three hundred times. Moreover in Isa. 42:10-12; Pss. 103:21; 148:2; Hab. 3:3 and 1En. 40:1 for instance, there is the concept of God being praised by a vast number.

f. Conclusion.

Jewish religious thought, from its very roots, had always struggled to achieve a greater insight into the divine world. It is from this deep well that the writer of the Apocalypse has drawn as his source of individual motifs and complexes of ideas which he has moulded into his numerous idiosyncratic word pictures and conceptions. It is a misguided venture to seek too far elsewhere for his inspiration for his throne-room scenes, as this is surely to overlook the wealth of ancient biblical tradition. Once this is given its rightful position the origins and continuity of this material can be clearly seen, and this makes it redundant to seek contemporary foreign influences. John is using the language and terminology of his Jewish heritage.¹⁸⁴

In conclusion, it is correct to say that John was speaking into his contemporary situation and also that he picked up on and used vernacular symbolism and motifs where and when it served his purpose. However to suggest that he was greatly influenced by Graeco-Roman pressures in his depiction of the heavenly throne-room is to hugely overstate that position. In fact that stance is untenable and the passage fits far more comfortably in its rightful place in the Jewish tradition.

2. Greek and Roman Drama.

a. Introduction.

Some of the more eminent of the ancient Greek writers included: the epic poet Homer;¹⁸⁵ the playwrights Aeschylus, Phrynicus, Sophocles and Euripides (tragedians); and Aristophanes, Menander and Diphilus (comic poets). These dramatists, among others, initially had a great influence on Roman culture. When the Romans conquered Greece, they took much of their literature as their own. They also renovated and reconstructed many of their theatres. The early Roman playwrights included the comic writers, Plautus (3rd/2nd BC) and Terence (2nd BC) and the tragedian, Seneca (1st AD). However, the Roman theatre failed to reach the heights of the Greek era and the general populace of the Roman empire had very little interest in the thespian craft. It became an elitist pursuit of the upper class, while the preference of the majority of the population lent more towards sensationalism which produced such spectacles as pantomime, and by the flooding of the orchestra area, aquatic games and mock naval battles. This would have been the typical situation of John's day where the main characteristic of public performance was one of circus rather than stagecraft. There is no doubt that the works of the Greek dramatists had a wide-reaching influence in the world of literature, but it is a lot less likely that they would have held much sway over the author of the Apocalypse.

¹⁸³ *ibid.* pg. 18.

¹⁸⁴ It is probably true that the Jewish apocalyptic tradition was always conscious that in describing the heavenly throne-room they were asserting God's superiority to the earthly empires whose kings in their own throne-rooms claimed divinity. The idea of the divine throne-room in heaven did not originate in the period of the great world empires but it did become popular when Israel was subject to them. However this is a different relationship from the one that Aune is suggesting.

¹⁸⁵ Although not a dramatist as such his work had a significant influence on the later Greek dramatists, and his poems would have been well known by theatregoers.

b. Rebuttal of the Influence of Greek or Roman Drama.

In this section we will consider two main points which are covered by the following questions:

- i) Did the literary form or genre of drama play any part in the moulding of the Apocalypse?
- ii) Was Revelation influenced by contemporary stagecraft, theatre furniture and furnishings?

We will attempt to demonstrate that the former is possible while the latter is very improbable.

i) Influence of Drama on Revelation.

It seems very plausible that the book of Revelation was penned with the original intention of being publicly read aloud as a complete work within the context of the local assembled church.¹⁸⁶ However it is probably an overstatement to advocate any dependence by John on any contemporary influence of Greek or Roman drama for his work. Some commentators have argued for this influence on the whole book, while others have attempted to identify its effect on only the heavenly throne-room scene.

The former position is taken by J. W. Bowman¹⁸⁷ who maintained that John composed his book as a drama¹⁸⁸ which displayed certain characteristics suggestive of contemporary Greek and Latin dramatic art. He sets out his outline of Revelation (pp. 440-443) by imposing on it his framework¹⁸⁹ of seven Acts each containing seven Scenes. Unfortunately as he inflicts his grid on the book he executes some rather dubious manoeuvres on the text. Thus, for example, the pivotal chapters four and five do not merit the status of an *Act* or even a *Scene* but are merely relegated to the *Setting* of the second Act (pg. 441).¹⁹⁰ It should also be noted that there exists a plethora of analyses of the Apocalypse as almost every commentator produces a different profile of it.¹⁹¹ So, for instance, D. L. Barr (1984) also argues for a drama, but one comprising three one-act plays on the same theme (Rev. 1:1-3:22, 4:1-11:19 and 12:1-22:21). Thus it is an extremely doubtful practice to base its suitability for the Graeco-Roman stage on the basis of one's own idiosyncratic dramatic structure of Revelation. Also, it would surely be impossible to imagine Revelation actually being staged in the first place. However, as we now look at the Jewish background, there may have been some associations with the world of drama.

Drama in the Jewish Background.

There is not a lot of evidence for anything in the Israelite background that resembled theatre.¹⁹² Some of their religious ceremonies such as the festival of living in tabernacles and the celebration of Passover did contain some ritual performances. However these occasions were more of a corporate national reminder of the important events of their history, rather than containing any concept of a spectacle being staged for the entertainment of an audience. It has also been argued that there was a basic difference between Hebraic and Greek thought. So 'the Hebrews experienced the world primarily through listening, the Greeks through seeing.'¹⁹³ This dichotomy has most likely been overdone. However it is feasibly possible to speak about Hellenistic traditions of thought and Hebrew traditions of thought in the context of

¹⁸⁶ Rev. 1:3 strongly infers the public reading of the book. See also Barr (1986) [pp. 243-249] who suggests in the first part of his paper the three oral techniques 'of numbering,' 'of place and image,' and 'of the scrolls.' Cf. 1 Tim. 4:13 where there is an exhortation to the reading of scripture within the context of public worship. However if one considers the complexity and depth of meaning found in the book, it would also have been studied, meditated on, and expounded. This would have shown more respect to its intrinsic value, than simply being acted out on a stage.

¹⁸⁷ Bowman (1953) pp. 436-53.

¹⁸⁸ He suggests that John constructed his work on two literary models: originally as a drama, and secondly as a letter to the churches, as John could neither hope nor wish to see his work performed on a Greek or Roman stage.

¹⁸⁹ Bowman claims that his outline represents the Seer's own way of conceiving his book. (pg. 440).

¹⁹⁰ On pg. 448 he lists Rev. 4:1-5:14 along with the sections 1:9-20; 8:3-5; 11:19; 15:5-8; 17:1,2; and 20:4-6 of which he categorises some of them as sections which 'are obviously so short and pointless in themselves.'

¹⁹¹ So, Yarbrow Collins (1976) [pg. 8] states, 'In current research on the Book of Revelation, there is very little consensus on the overall structure of the work and how that structure should be interpreted. There are almost as many outlines of the book as there are interpreters.'

¹⁹² See Anderson (1976) pg. 33. Cf. Macdonald (1895) pp. 16-28.

¹⁹³ Bowman (1962) pg. 1

dramatic representation. So J. P. M. Sweet¹⁹⁴ suggests that some scenes of the Hebrew Bible would be grotesque if visualised. Thus, for example, Isa. 55:12 'the trees of the field shall clap their hands' and SoS. 8:10 'my breast are like towers.'¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless there did exist some points of contact with the dramatic world. So, one of the books of wisdom found within the Hebrew Bible could be considered to be at least a dramatic form. The book of Job, without its prologue and epilogue, and with all its various speeches, could be described as a dramatic poem on the problem of suffering. It has also been proposed that the Apocryphal book of 4 Maccabees was used for solemn religious ceremonies.¹⁹⁶ The earliest extant Jewish drama was that produced by Ezekiel the Tragedian in the second century BC. There has been no little debate as to whether it was intended for actual stage production, or a *Lesedrama*, a tragedy meant for readers.¹⁹⁷ However it does demonstrate that a Diaspora Jew could adopt and use the literary form or genre of drama. Thus it would not be a necessity to search within John's contemporary cultural background for his structuring of the Apocalypse in this way, because his Jewish traditional background could have furnished this. It is feasible that John, at least in principle, could have followed this earlier example.

ii) Influence of Contemporary Stagecraft and Theatre Furnishings.

There is another argument that is forwarded with respect to the suggested influence of Graeco-Roman drama on Revelation. Some have maintained that the structure, items or practices of the theatre have been used by John in his book and especially in the inaugural throne-room scene. Firstly, many of the arguments which were put forward in the last section on the rebuttal of an Roman imperial court ceremonial influence are also of relevance to our topic at hand. However a few more comments can be made.

Firstly the rabbis held a very dim view of the theatre (i.e. the location, not the literature).¹⁹⁸

Thus from this background it is extremely unlikely that John would have used these buildings to influence his descriptions of the heavenly realm.

J. W. Bowman¹⁹⁹ has suggested that the silence in heaven (Rev. 8:1) 'is intended to serve as a half-hour's interim during which the actors all stand 'frozen' so to speak on this cosmic stage before we are presented in the four acts which follow (III through VI) with the detailed working out of the Divine plan in this eschatological time.' However R. Bauckham set it firmly in a Jewish cultic background with liturgical connotations.²⁰⁰

In an article on the genre of Revelation, J. L. Blevins²⁰¹ insisted that the Apocalypse was produced as a one-actor play (with chorus) with the theatre at Ephesus in mind. However it has been argued that the utterances by a variety of speakers within Revelation 'can hardly be explained as the lyric role of a chorus in a tragedy. They form part of the story of John's

¹⁹⁴ Sweet (1979) pg. 70.

¹⁹⁵ A similar situation exists if one considers some of the images portrayed in the book of Revelation such as an individual with a sword issuing from his mouth (Rev. 1:16) or a slaughtered Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes (Rev. 5:6). To do justice to these depictions it is far better to meditate on them as mental word-pictures which bristle with a depth of meaning, rather than something which if represented on a stage would verge on the bizarre if not the freakish. Thus any attempt to illustrate visually the cornucopia of images in the book would severely dilute their impact, and would ridiculously distort much of the symbolism which was meant to be savoured cerebrally, rather than as actual physical images or pictures. So, for instance Minear (1968) [pg. 31] comments on a block print of the description of Christ (Rev. 1:12-20) produced by A. Dürer in the 15th century, saying, 'Yet Dürer's effort to visualize a single figure with all the details mentioned by the prophet adds up to a bizarre ensemble indeed. One must say that, when John's description is turned into a visual replica, it shatters into fragments. The picture conveys neither the prophet's feelings nor his concerns. We can safely assert that John did not intend that his readers try to transfer his words into a single visual collage.' [pg. 31]

¹⁹⁶ See Hadas (1953) pp. 103ff.

¹⁹⁷ See Jacobson (1981) especially pp. 167-175 for a discussion and references.

¹⁹⁸ See Jacobson (1981) [pg. 170 nt. 17] for a list of works on this subject.

¹⁹⁹ Bowman (1962) pg. 451.

²⁰⁰ Bauckham (1993) pp. 70-83.

²⁰¹ Blevins, (1980) pp. 393-408.

transcendental experience and are the words of different speakers in the narrative, not of the chorus acting in a tragedy.²⁰²

In the defence of his translation of the phrase ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου in Rev. 4:6, R. R. Brewer²⁰³ has attempted to place the throne-room scene in the background of Graeco-Roman theatre. So he makes reference to: the circular floor arrangement to accommodate the chorus and orchestra; temple facades; the front row of auditorium seats which were carved stone seats, or 'thrones' reserved for priests or high dignitaries; the altar upon which the sacrifices that customarily marked the opening of the drama were offered; the comic chorus usually consisting of twenty-four members; the paved orchestra which may represent the sea of glass; and the masked chorus as the four living creatures.' As already mentioned above, it seems very improbable that John would 'make a model of the incidental pagan counterpart as an answer to pagan influences in the cities he addresses. And it does not work out in detail.'²⁰⁴

Also as we have seen earlier and will later expand, the configuration of the throne-room, its furnishing and furniture have a far greater affinity with the throne-room scenes of the Old Testament, and the cultic settings of the tabernacle and temple. So, we would argue strongly that it was not John's intention, to 'creatively erect a new Christian literary structure on the old scaffolding provided by the Graeco-Roman stage,'²⁰⁵ but rather he was building on the firm foundation stones of an earlier Jewish traditional background.

E. Introduction to Revelation 4 and 5.

1. General Opening Comments.

In the light of our foregoing discussion on the background subjects to the inaugural throne-vision, and before we look in detail at Revelation chapters 4 and 5, it is worthwhile to make some introductory observations so that we can place our studies in some sort of perspective. In these two chapters, four and five, the setting clearly changes from earth to heaven²⁰⁶ and throughout the remainder of the book the scene moves between these two loci as John relates his vision to his audience. However, it is important to note that the action is viewed from the reference point of the heavenly throne-room which is always in total control of the situation on earth.

As this initial vision spans two chapters it has led some to contrast rather than to compare the two sections.²⁰⁷ This has also prompted some to question the Christian influence and content²⁰⁸ of chapter 4, while it has caused others to undermine the real importance of the chapter.²⁰⁹

²⁰² Vorster (1988) pg. 115.

²⁰³ Brewer (1952) pp. 227-231.

²⁰⁴ For his discussion, see Hemer (1986) pp. 27-30.

²⁰⁵ Bowman (1962) pg. 450.

²⁰⁶ Our main focus of study is the throne vision of chapters 4 and 5 which serves as an introduction to the rest of the Apocalypse. However, because of the great importance of the final vision and the many threads of progression that are evident towards it, we will take time to compare the functions and role they both play within the message of the book.

²⁰⁷ Thompson (1969) [pg. 332ff.] sees chapter 5 as formally a new vision based on the phrase καὶ εἶδον (Rev. 5:1). In fact he uses this phrase along with καὶ ἤκουσα to divide Revelation into a whole series of 'visionettes' (not always convincingly) to support his structure for the book. Using this criterion, chapter 5 is actually divided into five fragments at Rev. 5:1,2,6,11,13. It is probably more appropriate to view the Apocalypse, from 4:1 to 22:20, as the literary record of an unfolding vision with the author repeatedly emphasising his debt to ecstatic experience.

²⁰⁸ Bauckham (1993A) [pg. 32] suggests that, 'There is nothing in chapter 4 which could not have been written by a non-Christian Jewish visionary' and Rowland (1982) [pg. 222] states that, 'Revelation 4... shows no evidence at all of Christian influence, and treated in isolation, it is evident that it is entirely Jewish in its inspiration.'

²⁰⁹ So, Rowland (1979) [pg. 150] suggests that Revelation 4 is 'incidental to the overriding purpose of the work as a whole.' However Bauckham (1993A) [pg. 32] correctly observes that, 'the absence of distinctively Christian features from chapter 4 by no means diminishes its foundational importance for the theology of Revelation.'

L. W. Hurtado has challenged these two assumptions - the latter, probably more successfully, than the former.²¹⁰ This perceived dichotomy of the text, which has been exacerbated by the chapter divisions is rather unfortunate. It would have been preferable for the chapter division to have been extended to the end of chapter five where there is an obvious change of locale at the opening of the first seal.²¹¹ This is not to say of course, that there are not large differences of themes and thus purposes of the two sections, and also that there is a clear progression through the vision. But it is better to consider it as a vision in two sections rather than two separate visions. This assists in comprehending the vision as a continuum, (rather than two contrasting parts) which was probably closer to the author's original intention.²¹² In fact, in one sense as we shall see, it is a continuous and developing entity throughout the rest of the book. Revelation 4-5 has been described, among others things, as a court scene,²¹³ a military control room in action,²¹⁴ a reflection of the royal courts of the Orient,²¹⁵ a synagogue,²¹⁶ and a heavenly temple.²¹⁷ All of these depictions may have contributed to a greater or lesser extent to this throne-vision scene.²¹⁸

D. Aune²¹⁹ has suggested, with various examples, that throne-visions function in six ways:

- a. *Enthronement Scenes*, i.e., someone is rewarded by God by coronation, enthronement, or investiture.
- b. *Judgment Scenes*, i.e. God or the Messiah judges (i.e., rules) and rewards the righteous and punishes transgressors.
- c. *Commission Scenes*, i.e., God commissions an emissary to perform a particular task.
- d. *Eschatological Heavenly Festal Gathering Scenes*, i.e. scenes based on the real or imaginary cultic practices of the second temple or of the Sinai theophany are used to depict an eschatological gathering of heavenly and earthly beings to praise and worship God before his throne.
- e. *Visions of God as the God of Merkavah Mysticism*.
- f. *Literary Throne Scenes*, i.e., the primarily literary use of the throne vision is as a vehicle for commenting on the earthly events in the narrative.

Some of his categorisations probably have more usefulness than others. There are also quite a few of the major throne-room scenes that he neglects to mention. The most important of these for our considerations here are the indispensable throne-vision(s) of Rev. 21-22. He also inadequately classifies Rev. 4:1-6:17 as a literary throne scene. We would suggest that the main function of Revelation 4 and 5 is that of a worship scene of God and the Lamb. The emphasis of chapter 4 is to highlight the transcendence of the One seated on the throne, while in chapter 5 the focus shifts to the Lamb and his investiture. Thus, the inaugural vision's primary

²¹⁰Hurtado (1985) pp. 105-124. His main argument revolves around his resolution that the twenty-four elders are to be identified as the heavenly representatives of the elect.

²¹¹ Chapter divisions were established in the 13th century by S. Langton. Later, versification was introduced by R. Stephanus. This system was employed by T. Beza in the 16th century in his edition of the New Testament, thus securing this scheme which we are familiar with today. In our case it is perhaps prudent to follow the advice of Robertson (1925) [pg. 101] "The first step in interpretation is to ignore the modern chapters and verses."

²¹² Kiddle (1940) [pg. 94] has observed, 'Chap v. is a continuation of chap. iv., and the two must not be artificially separated. Either would be incomplete without the other, inasmuch as fallen Creation is incomplete without Redemption, and because in an apocalypse earth can be understood only in its relation to heaven.'

²¹³ Davis (1992) [pg. vii] views Revelation 4-5 as a depiction of a judgment session by the divine council which is an integral part of the larger covenant theme that dominates the book of Revelation. Farrer (1964) [pg. 89] cites Isaiah 24:21-23 in support of this view.

²¹⁴ Caird (1966) pg. 16.

²¹⁵ Mowry (1952) [pp. 76-77] suggests 'as they existed in fact and in fanciful elaboration in folk lore and story of the Orient generally.' See also, Court (1994) pg. 26-27.

²¹⁶ Caird (1966) pg. 61; Sweet (1979) pg. 115.

²¹⁷ Sweet (1979) pp. 114-121.

²¹⁸ Sweet (1979) [pg. 115] is correct when he observes that 'The setting of the scene cannot be tied down to any one earthly model.'

²¹⁹ See Aune (1997) pp. 277-78.

concern is worship. This feature remains as the backdrop in the unfolding drama throughout the Apocalypse,²²⁰ to be reinstated as the main characteristic of the final vision (Rev. 21-22). In the intervening scenes, the throne-room scene becomes an active military command centre (Rev. 6-19) and a judicial court (Rev. 20:4-11).²²¹ It should be noted the worship scene of the final vision is a very different entity in relationship to that of the inaugural vision. The transcendent scene has mellowed significantly to one of a far more immanent nature as we shall observe. The absolutely sovereign God dwells with his people(s) in a father-child relationship (Rev. 21:3,7).

John is taken up into heaven, then, in order to see the world and its working from a heavenly frame of reference. He is given a glimpse behind the scenes of history so that his audience can see what is really going on in the events of time and space. It is not only the present situation which is elucidated. His visions take him into the future, beyond the final great assizes, where he views from a distance the eschatological Garden city, Paradise renewed.

However for just now we will turn our attention to chapters 4 and 5. Our approach will be not so much a 'verse by verse' exegesis, but rather a highlighting and a discussion of the principal features and characteristics, those that are present within this inaugural vision, and those which John has chosen to omit from it.

2. Outline of Revelation chapters 4 and 5.

I. John's heavenly ascent. (1-2a)

- A. He observes an opened door in heaven. (1a)
- B. The command to ascend. (1b-c)
 - 1. The voice like a trumpet of 1:10
 - 2. The reason is to view future events.
- C. He is instantaneously under the inspiration of the Spirit. (2a)

II The heavenly throne-room scene. (4:2b-5:14)

- A. Worship exclusively to the enthroned One. (4:2b-11)
 - 1. The throne in heaven. (2b)
 - 2. The enthroned One. (2c-3)
 - a. Appearance like jasper and carnelian. (3a)
 - b. Surrounded by an emerald-like rainbow. (3b)
 - 3. The surrounding environment of the heavenly throne. (4-11)
 - a. Twenty-four thrones. (4a)
 - b. Twenty-four elders. (4b-d)
 - 1) Enthroned.
 - 2) Dressed in white robes.
 - 3) Wearing golden crowns.
 - c. Manifestations from the throne. (5a)
 - 1) Flashes of lightning.
 - 2) Rumbles.
 - 3) Peals of thunder.
 - d. Items in front of the throne. (5b-6a)
 - 1) Seven flaming torches (= the seven spirits of God).
 - 2) A sea of glass like crystal.
 - e. The four living creatures (around and on each side of the throne). (6b-8b)
 - 1) Generic characteristic - full of eyes in front and behind. (6b)
 - 2) Individual characteristics. (7)
 - a) The first - like a lion. (7a)
 - b) The second - like an ox. (7b)
 - c) The third - with a face like a human face. (7c)
 - d) The fourth - like a flying eagle. (7d)

²²⁰ Thompson (1990) ch. 4 'Unity through the language of Worship,' pp. 53-73.

²²¹ Under the influence of Dan. 7 this throne-room scene appears to take place on earth rather than in heaven.

- 3) Additional generic characteristics. (8a-c)
 - a) Each has six wings. (8a)
 - b) Each are full of eyes all around and inside. (8b)
 - c) They sing without ceasing, day and night. (8c)
- f. The heavenly liturgy. (8d-11).
 - 1) The worship of the four living creatures (8d-9)
 - a) Their hymn of praise (8d)
 - (1) The trisagion - holy, holy, holy.
 - (2) Addressed to the Lord God the Almighty.
 - (3) Who was and is and is to come.
 - b) A summary of their homage. (9)
 - (1) They give glory and honour and thanks.
 - (2) Addressed to the enthroned One who lives forever and ever.
 - 2) The reaction of the twenty-four elders. (10-11)
 - a) They fall before the enthroned One. (11a)
 - b) They worship the one who lives forever and ever. (11b)
 - c) They cast their crowns before the throne whilst singing. (11c)
 - d) Their hymn of praise. (11)
 - (1) Addressed to the Lord and God who is worthy to receive glory and honour and power.
 - (2) Who created all things and by his will they exist and were created.
- B. The Lamb receives the scroll and worship. (5:1-14)
 1. The Lamb receives the scroll. (1-7)
 - a. John observes and describes the scroll. (1)
 - 1) In the enthroned One's right hand. (1a)
 - 2) It is written on the inside and the back. (1b)
 - 3) It is sealed with seven seals. (1c)
 - b. The search for someone to open the scroll. (2-5)
 - 1) The question of the mighty angel - who is worthy? (2)
 - a) To open the scroll.
 - b) To break its seals.
 - 2) The answer - no-one is found in heaven or on earth or under the earth. (3)
 - 3) John's reaction - to weep bitterly because no-one was found worthy. (4)
 - a) To open the scroll.
 - b) To look into it.
 - 4) One of the elders solves the dilemma. (5)
 - a) John is told not to weep.
 - b) Someone has conquered and so can open the scroll and its seven seals.
 - (1) The Lion of the tribe of Judah.
 - (2) The Root of David.
 - c. John observes the Lamb and his induction. (6-7)
 - 1) The position of the Lamb. (6a)
 - a) Between the throne and the four living creatures.
 - b) Among the elders.
 - 2) The appearance of the Lamb. (6b)
 - a) Standing as if it had been slaughtered.
 - b) With seven horns and eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth.
 - 3) The action of the Lamb. He takes the scroll from the right hand of the enthroned One. (7)
 2. The Lamb receives worship. (8-14)
 - a. The response of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. (8-10)
 - 1) Both groups fall down before the Lamb. (8a)
 - 2) The elders are holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense = the saint's prayers. (8b)
 - 3) They sing a new song to the Lamb. (9-10)
 - a) The proclamation - He is worthy to take the scroll and open its seals. (9b)
 - b) The justification for their praise. (9c-d)
 - (1) He was slaughtered. (9c)

- (2) He ransomed peoples for God by his blood. (9d)
 - Saints from every tribe and language and people and nation.
- c) The Result: They are a kingdom and priests serving God and will reign on earth. (10)
- b. The heavenly praise of the Lamb. (11-12)
 - 1) The participants, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands. (11)
 - a) The living creatures.
 - b) The elders.
 - c) The voice of many angels.
 - 2) The hymn. (12)
 - a) The proclamation - The Lamb that was slaughtered is worthy. (12a)
 - b) Attributed designated. (12b)
 - (1) Power and wealth and wisdom and might.
 - (2) Honour and glory and blessing.
- c. The universal praise of the enthroned One and the Lamb. (13-14)
 - 1) The participants - every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea. (13a)
 - 2) The hymn. (13b)
 - a) The recipients - The enthroned One and the Lamb.
 - b) The acclamation - Be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!
- d. The Conclusion. (14)
 - 1) The four living creatures said 'Amen!'
 - 2) The elders fell down and worshipped.

F. The Ascent of the Seer.

In recent years there has been a renewed interest in the subject of heavenly ascents and their associated journeys which has produced a number of articles and books.²²² These works generally focus on experiences that are far more elaborate and extended than John's ascent which is really simplicity itself. He makes no reference whatsoever to any such protracted celestial journey and his experience is that of an immediate audience in the presence of the Deity.

1. Old Testament Ascent.

Although the notion of ascent to heaven is not very prevalent in the Old Testament, it is not totally absent. There are the permanent ascents, on their deaths, of Enoch and Elijah. Enoch's ascent is described in simple terms in Gen. 5:24 where it relates that, 'Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him.' The description of Elijah's preparation for, and his ascent itself, is recorded in 2Kgs. 2:1-12 and it is a much more elaborate affair. He is taken up in a whirlwind while being accompanied by a chariot of fire and horses of fire. None of the Old Testament throne visions involves the actual mention of the rapture of the seer. However there are certain details within their accounts which most possibly would have led later Jewish readers to understand these experiences as being actual ascents to heaven. It would have been a simple matter for Moses' and his companions' ascent of Mount Sinai (Exod. 24:9-10) to have been construed as an ascent to heaven where they saw God. Indeed, two of the targums to this passage (*Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Onqelos*) refer to God's throne. In Isaiah's vision, the prophet physically takes part in the scene when the seraph touches his lips with a live coal (Isa. 6:6-8). There is also a similar incident in Ezekiel 3:1-2, where the prophet opens his mouth to eat the scroll given to him by God. Lastly, in Daniel's vision, it is recorded that he *approaches* one of the throne-room attendants during his vision experience, [קרבה על-חד מן-קאמיא] and converses with him (Dan. 7:15ff). Thus, although there are no explicit references to an ascent, there are certainly strong implications of something moving towards that position.

²²² So, for example, Segal (1980) pp. 1333-1394; Dean-Otting (1984); Tabor (1986); Himmelfarb (1988) pp.73-100; Himmelfarb (1993); Borgen (1993); Davila (1999) pp. 461-85.

2. The Open Throne-room Door.

As we look particularly at John's ascent, we see that he introduces his experience by employing conventional vision phraseology ('I saw and behold' εἶδον καὶ ἰδοῦ) ²²³ which he repeats frequently throughout the Apocalypse. ²²⁴ The object of his view is 'a door having been opened' (θύρα ἡνεωγμένη). ²²⁵ The use of the perfect tense suggests that the door has been opened and left that way in anticipation of John's arrival. This is a specialisation of the more common description 'the heavens were opened.' ²²⁶ The particular use of the 'open door' motif here would seem to be very rare. ²²⁷ Firstly it appears and is used at the very outset of his vision, not rather at some later stage after his ascent. In the Old Testament we encounter this image twice, ²²⁸ in Gen. 28:17 ('door to the heavens' שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם) and Ps. 78:23 ('doors of the heavens' דְּלֹזֵי שָׁמַיִם). However the former is firmly fixed on earth ²²⁹ and the latter is in the plural and also the conveyance is downwards rather than upwards. This second reference appears to be synonymous with the term 'windows of heaven.' ²³⁰

The comparison with the Jewish apocalypses is complicated in that they have a series of heavens, so that entry from earth to the heavenly sphere is one step and entry into the throne-room (or seeing into it) is a subsequent step, whereas, as we have already mentioned, John refers only to a single door through which he moves from earth into the throne-room. Hence, in the earlier work, the Book of Watchers, the term 'door' and 'doors' are referred to within the heavenly realm. However they are not Enoch's initial access into heaven but appear later on in his journey. The first house he encounters has fiery doors (1En. 14:12). The second larger house has a door which is completely opened (1En. 14:15). ²³¹ This would appear to be one of the closest parallels to the door in Rev. 4:1, but there is no possibility of Enoch entering - in fact he is even unable to approach it. ²³² There is also a similar situation in the Testament of Levi. In TLevi 5:1, the gates of heaven (= the throne-room) are opened by an angel, so that Levi can see God and receive his message, but again he does not enter the actual throne-room. In the Ascension of Isaiah 6:6 we read that 'they all heard a door being opened' ²³³ - this door appears to be an access from the earthly into the heavenly realm. There is the interesting parallel here in that both Isaiah and John are able to hear a voice from heaven after the door into heaven has been opened. Later on in this work and in Isaiah's experience, he does enter the throne-room (AscIsa. 9:6ff) as does Abraham in the Apocalypse of Abraham 18:1ff. ²³⁴ This

²²³ Cf. Ezek. 1:4; 2:9; 8:2,4,10; 10:1,9; Dan. 7:6-7; Zech. 2:1,5; 5:1,9; 8:2,4.

²²⁴ Rev. 6:2,5,8; 7:9; 14:1,14; 19:11, cf. Rev. 7:1; 15:5; 18:1.

²²⁵ For the use of this motif of the door in conjunction with supernatural experiences in the *earthly* realm, see Weinreich (1929) pp. 200-464.

²²⁶ This phrase appears later on in Rev. 19:11 (cf. Rev. 11:19; 15:5). Cf. Ezek. 1:1; Mat. 3:16 [Mk. 1:10; Lk. 3:21]; Jn. 1:51; Acts 7:56; 10:11; 2Bar. 22:1; *Ap. John* 20,20; TLevi. 2:6; TAbra.[A] 7:3; GPet. 26; ApPaul 43.

²²⁷ The general use of the motifs of 'gate of heaven' and 'gates of heaven' are common in other apocalyptic works, classical writings, Gnosticism, and especially later Jewish mysticism. For 'gate of heaven' see TJac. 2:17; ApPaul 21,24; *Apoc. Paul* 20:10,27; 3Bar. [Gk] 11:1-2; cf. HistRech. 16:1b 'gate of the holy Trinity.' For 'gates of heaven' see 3Macc. 6:18; 1En. 9:2,10; TLevi. 5:1; 3Bar. [SI] 11:1-2. In 3Bar. [Gr] 2:2; 3:1 & 5:2 there is mention of a very large door in the first and second heavens (the Slavonic version of these verses refers to 'doors').

²²⁸ In Ps. 84:10 there is also a reference to a 'doorkeeper' [הַסֹּדֵר] in the house of God. The role of gatekeepers is a prominent one in the later Gnostic writings [e.g. *Apoc. Paul* 20:16, 20-23; *1Apoc. Jas.* 33:7-15] and the *Hekhalot* literature [e.g. 3En. 18:3; *Hek. Rab.* 17]. Cf. AscIsa. 10:24,25.

²²⁹ This is also true of the reference in LadJac. 2:3, the Jewish apocalypse of c. 100A.D. which is an interpretation of the patriarch Jacob's vision.

²³⁰ See Gen. 7:11; 8:2; Isa. 24:18; Mal. 3:10; 2Kgs. 7:2, 19. Cf. 2En. 73:4 [J] 'The Lord God opened the doors of heaven. Rain came onto the earth for 150 days.'

²³¹ In 1En. 14:25, after his throne-vision, Enoch is led to the threshold of the door by one of the holy angels where he prostrates himself and hears the voice of the Almighty.

²³² See Black (1985) pg. 148.

²³³ 'The door is only referred to in the Ethiopic text, but not in the Latin translations. See Charles (1900) pg. 99.

²³⁴ Cf. TIsaac 6:4 where Isaac is seemingly taken within the environs of the throne, but God appears to be hidden from view behind a curtain which is draped in front of the throne. See also *b.Yoma* 77a; *b.Ber.* 18b; *Hyp. Arch.* 95.21-22; *Exc.Theo.* 62:1; 3En. 45:1ff.; cf. Exod. 26:31ff.; 39:34ff.; Num. 4:5.

will also be the experience of John in his vision. He will not only be able to see and hear the heavenly proceedings, but he will enter the open door as well. This will be his access from earth to heaven, and the entrance to his revelation.

Along with the Jewish literature already cited, the major influence on John's imagery of this 'open door' is also that of the tabernacle²³⁵ and temple.²³⁶ They are both referred to subsequently in the Apocalypse as being located in heaven (Rev. 11:19 & 15:5).²³⁷ The important linking detail attributed to each of them is that they 'were opened' [ἡνοίγη] and this allowed immediate passage through them. The temple and the tabernacle, of course, had several doors and 'courts' and this is reflected in the Jewish picture of heaven. Thus for Enoch and Levi (1En. 14 & TLevi. 5) the throne-room is the holy of holies, the innermost part of the sanctuary. However, John in his depiction of heaven appears to simplify this structure. He combines the holy place and the holy of holies to form just one room with one door from earth to heaven.

3. John's Invitation to Ascend 'in the Spirit'.

a. In the Spirit.

John's experience is not only visual but it is also audible. He not only sees an opened door, but he also hears a voice of invitation,²³⁸ which is like a trumpet,²³⁹ requesting him to experience a divine revelation of ineluctable events ('things that must occur after these things' [ἀ δὲ γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα]).²⁴⁰ This voice²⁴¹ is clearly the voice of Rev. 1:10-20,²⁴² that of the risen Christ.²⁴³ Immediately John is 'in the Spirit' [ἐν πνεύματι].²⁴⁴ This expression 'is best understood as a technical term for the visionary's experience of "rapture" by the Spirit. It is probably to be taken as both phenomenological and theological, denoting both the visionary experience as such and the Spirit's authorship of it.... John was ἐν πνεύματι in the sense that his normal sensory experience was replaced by visions and auditions given to him by the Spirit.'²⁴⁵ Some have translated the phrase with the emphasis on the experience of a trance,²⁴⁶ but this undermines the agency of the Spirit which provides an important link with John's and Ezekiel's visions. In Ezek. 2:2ff; 3:24ff; 11:5ff,²⁴ the Spirit is the agent of vision-prophecy (cf. Rev. 1:10; 4:1,2), and in Ezek. 3:12,14; 8:3; 11:1,24; 37:1; 43:5 the Spirit is the agent of transportation (cf. Rev. 4:1,2; 17:3; 21:10).

²³⁵ See Exod. 36:37; 40:6,28.

²³⁶ See 1Kgs. 6:31,34. Aune, (1997) [pp. 280-281] makes much of Greek and Roman temples as is his disposition, but John's guidance stems from his Jewish background.

²³⁷ As we discussed earlier, in the section 'The Temple in Revelation,' it is difficult, with quite a few references which John makes to the temple, to decide whether it is a structure within heaven or whether he is referring to heaven itself, and in particular the throne-room. Notwithstanding this, the temple had a large influence on the book of Revelation.

²³⁸ In Rev. 11:12 the two prophets are invited to 'Come up here!' by a 'loud voice from heaven.' In TLevi. 2:6, the heavens were opened and the seer is commanded to enter by an angel of God. However 2Bar. 22:1 is closer to John's experience where again the heaven was opened, but this time it is recorded that he sees, and also hears a voice from on high (cf. 2Bar. 13:1 'a voice came from the high heavens').

²³⁹ Cf. Exod. 19:16,19; 20:18; Ps. 81:3; Isa. 27:13; 1Cor. 15:52; 1Thes. 4:16; Heb. 12:19.

²⁴⁰ See Rev. 1:1,19; 22:6; cf. Dan. 2:29, 45.

²⁴¹ Aune (1997) [pg. 282] sees this section as a linking redactional gloss in support of his source-critical theory.

²⁴² Some would see two separate speakers, Christ and an angel, in this section. So Beckwith (1919) pg. 436; Zahn (1909) I pp. 317-18.

²⁴³ So Bousset (1906) pg. 243; Kiddle (1940) pp. 1, 80; Beasley-Murray (1974) pp. 111-12; Mounce (1977) pp. 76, 133.

²⁴⁴ For a comprehensive treatment of the four occurrences of the phrase ἐν πνεύματι in Revelation under the heading of 'The Spirit of vision,' see Bauckham (1993) pp. 150-162. See also Farrer (1964) pp. 23-29 'The nature of St. John's visionary experience'.

²⁴⁵ Bauckham (1993) pg. 152.

²⁴⁶ So Kiddle (1940) [pp. 11, 80] 'rapt in the Spirit; he fell into a trance.'; Caird (1966) [pg. 59] 'I fell into a trance'; Aune (1993) [pg. 283] 'I was in a prophetic trance.'

The invitation to ascend and to receive his visions of prophetic insight was given by the risen Christ. However the whole experience is facilitated and achieved by being ἐν πνεύματι. Therefore the Spirit is the agent of the transportation into heaven, and also of the vision-prophecy.²⁴⁷ In earlier and contemporary Jewish and Christian material, the Spirit is responsible for furnishing visions (cf. Ezekiel references above, also Num. 24:2-4; Joel 2:28 [Acts 2:17]; Acts 7:55; AscIsa. 6:10-12).²⁴⁸ But, although, transportation by the Spirit is referred to in this material,²⁴⁹ it is almost always terrestrial²⁵⁰ (see Ezekiel references above, also 1Kgs 18:12; 2Kgs. 2:16; 1En. 52:1; 2Bar. 6:3; Acts 8:39; cf. the introductory cosmic tour in Sefer Eliyahhu [HebApEl]). Thus, this combined role of the Spirit's action (heavenly rapture and vision) in Rev. 4:1-2 would appear to be unique in extant Jewish and Christian literature. Additionally, there is no distraction from the Spirit being identified as the only agent of transportation, by the mention of the involvement of any *vehicle* in his ascent. In quite a number of ascents, there is reference to a particular vehicle being used. These mainly reflected the mode of Elijah's translation to which we referred to earlier,²⁵¹ Ezekiel's 'cherubim chariot',²⁵² and the Lord's 'cloud/wind chariot'.²⁵³ Other works refer to the conveyance by angels (3Bar. 2:1; AscIsa. 6:13; 7:2; TAb. [A] 19:1),²⁵⁴ or on their wings (2En. 3:1; 72:9; ApEl. 5:4; ApSedr. 2:5).²⁵⁵ But in John's experience there is no concept of a heavenly vehicle and his translation is instantaneous, ἐν πνεύματι.

Apart from his reference to being ἐν πνεύματι John does not elaborate on his state of translation. This contrasts with the apostle Paul (2Cor. 12:2,3)²⁵⁶ who questions whether he was 'in the body' [ἐν σώματι]²⁵⁷ or 'out of the body' [ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος].²⁵⁸ In the contemporary apocalypse to Revelation, the Ascension of Isaiah, the prophet's rapture is seen as an out-of-body experience²⁵⁹ (cf. 1En. 71:1,5).²⁶⁰ These 'out of the body' experiences, were very typical notions in Gnostic²⁶¹ and Hermetic²⁶² writings and later Jewish mysticism.

²⁴⁷ Bauckham (1993) [pg. 158 nt. 17] remarks that 'John is much less interested than many other apocalyptists in describing psychologically his visionary experience.' He also observes that the context of John's vision does not involve dreams, visions of the night or awakening from sleep.

²⁴⁸ However in later material this is not the case. In fact in most apocalyptic material, the involvement of the Spirit in visions is very uncommon.

²⁴⁹ 1En 70:2 refers to the heavenly ascent of Enoch in a 'chariot of the spirit' [Black (1985) pg. 67]. But with the close association of spirit and wind, the likely influence is that of 2Kgs 2:11, Elijah's rapture in a chariot of fire and a whirlwind. Also Isaac, OTP 1 (1983) [pg. 49] translates it as a 'wind chariot' with the footnote 'Or "spirit"'. Cf. Ap. John 14.33 where Jesus ascends to heaven in a chariot of spirit. In later literature (Christian and/or Christian-influenced), the Spirit is involved in heavenly transportation. See Apoc. Paul 19.20-24 and ApPaul 11 which appear to be related.

²⁵⁰ In ApZeph. [A] the reference to 'a spirit took me and brought me up into the fifth heaven' appears to be an exception. It is worthwhile noting that Jewish texts were often ambivalent about 'a spirit' (=angel) and 'the Spirit' (of God).

²⁵¹ Sir. 48:9; LivPro. 21:15; SibOr. 2.187; JosAs. 17:8; GrApEzra. 7:6; EpistPsTitus; 3En. 6:1; Hek. Zut. §349.

²⁵² See Pss. 80:1; 99:1; cf. Ps. 18:10; 2Sam. 22:11; TAb. [A] 9:8; 10:1.

²⁵³ See Pss. 68:4; 104:3; Isa. 19:1; Jer. 4:13; 1En. 14:8; 39:3; LLAE 25:3; TAb. [A] 9:15; TAb. [B] 8:3; 10:2; GrApEzra 5:7.

²⁵⁴ Cf. GLAE 38:3 'And the LORD of hosts mounted up, the winds drawing him, and the cherubim being above the winds; and the angels of heaven were leading him.'

²⁵⁵ Cf. ApAbr. 15:2, Abraham ascends on the right wing of a pigeon while the angel sat on the left wing of a turtledove.

²⁵⁶ For recent discussions on Paul's experience in 2Cor. 12:1-12 see Tabor (1986); Martin (1986) pp. 387-424; Morray-Jones (1993) pp. 177-217 and Morray-Jones (1993A) pp. 265-92.

²⁵⁷ In TAb. [B] 8:3 'Michael.... caught up Abraham in the body upon a cloud.'

²⁵⁸ 'Some have seen this phrase as equivalent to the usage of ἐν πνεύματι in Rev. 4:2. However, Bauckham, (1993) [pp. 150-159] argues that this is not the sense in Rev. 17:3 and 21:10, and this reference in Rev. 4:2 (as in 1:10) is to the divine Spirit, thus making John consistent both with his own and with early Christian usage.

²⁵⁹ AscIsa. 6:10 'And the vision which he saw was not from this world, but from the world which is hidden from the flesh' [translation Knibb (1985) pg. 165]. Sir. 48:24-25 refers to Isaiah's visions of the future 'by his dauntless spirit.'

b. Absence of Other Requirements.

The motif of the transformation of the visionary²⁶³ does not occur in earlier Jewish literature but it seems to appear in works around the time of Revelation. John, in this respect, follows the earlier tradition, as there is no suggestion of him experiencing any type of transformation. However, in some of these apocalypses contemporary with Revelation this is not the case. In 2 En. 22:10, Enoch becomes 'like one of the glorious ones: there was no observable difference.'²⁶⁴ As Isaiah ascends, in the Apocalypse of Isaiah,²⁶⁵ his glory increased until in the seventh heaven he finds himself equal with the angels. In the Similitudes of Enoch (1En. 71:11) Enoch's whole body melted and his spirit was transformed. The later *hekhalot* apocalypse, 3 Enoch (*Sefer Hekhalot*) describes Enoch's transformation to Metatron by expanding into a massive being with seventy-two wings (3En. 9). In these *hekhalot* texts 'the culmination of ascent is often the visionary's participation in the heavenly liturgy as a manifestation of his equality with the angels.'²⁶⁶

John is also in keeping with earlier traditional thought in that he requires no special preparation or techniques to experience the throne-room vision.²⁶⁷ He is not obliged to fast,²⁶⁸ to pray or to mourn.²⁶⁹ He does not need to recite ecstasy-inducing liturgies.²⁷⁰ Nor had he to experience preparatory ablutions²⁷¹ or baptisms which are present in some Gnostic writings (e.g. *Trim. Prot.* 48, 7-14; 49,32-34; *Marsanes* 65,22;66,1; *Zost.* 5,14-7,22 etc) and Jewish mystical literature.

Finally, it should be noted that the function of John's ascent - that he could return and communicate God's instructions and purposes - corresponds to that of other Jewish apocalypses and to the Old Testament prophets' experiences.²⁷² This also appears to be the sole purpose of his ascent. There is no sense of him being enabled to become in some way part of what was going on in heaven, effectively one of the angels. Personal gratification was not a consideration, but rather he was in heaven purely as an observer in order to report what he had witnessed.

²⁶⁰ In the History of Rechabites chs. 14-16 there is an intricate description of the ascent on death of the 'pure soul' to the throne of God. Cf. ApSedr. 11:10-11; TJob 52:6-10.

²⁶¹ Cf. *Paraph. Shem* 1.7-8, 14-15, 47.8-11; *1 Apoc. Jas.* 27.2-7; *Gos. Mary* 16,1ff.

²⁶² See, for example, *Disc.* 8-9. This work suggests that ascent can be experienced in a spiritual sense while still alive, while normally Gnostic works focus on the ascent of the soul at death.

²⁶³ Often associated with this phenomenon is the receiving of heavenly garments, e.g. 2En. 22:8ff; ApAbr.13:14; AscIsa. 8:14,15; 9:9ff; TLevi. 8:5; 3En. 12:1-2; ApZeph. 8:2. Cf. *Paraph. Shem* 41.28 refers to an 'invincible garment.'

²⁶⁴ Anderson, OTP I pp.138-9.

²⁶⁵ For a discussion of Isaiah's transformation, see Himmelfarb (1986) pp. 97-111.

²⁶⁶ Himmelfarb, (1991) pg. 85. For a discussion of transformation in this literature, see Morray-Jones (1992) pp. 1-31.

²⁶⁷ This is also similar to other New Testament accounts: Paul (2 Cor. 12:1-4); Stephen (Acts 7:55-56).

²⁶⁸ See GrApEzra 1:3-5; ApAbr. 12:1-2; ApZos. I.

²⁶⁹ In Dan. 2:18ff; 9:3 10:3 prayer, fasting and mourning are mentioned but this is the context of visions of the night and not the throne-room vision. Cf. 4Ezra 5:13; 6:30-31,35-36; 7:1; 9:23-28; 2Bar. 9:2-10:1; TLevi. 2:4.

²⁷⁰ This is a major focus in the *Hekhalot* literature (e.g. *Hekhalot Rabbati*). See Grözinger (1980) pp. 66-77. Gruenwald (1980) [pg. 99] suggests, 'In fact, it may be said that the whole of the *Hekhalot* literature might be defined as technical guides, or manuals, for mystics....' 'These technical details, the "praxis" of the mystical experience, generally consists of special prayers or incantations, of prolonged fasts and special diets, of the utterance of magical names and the use of magical seals, and of the ritual of cleansing the body.' For discussion on these see pp. 99-109. Cf. ApAbr. 10:9; 17:4ff where Abraham recites a hymn of praise for protection and admission. In the Gnostic *Steles Seth* there is the record of the hymns sung by the seer before the three natures of God.

²⁷¹ Cf. GLAE 37:3 where on death Adam's body is washed three times by one of the six-winged seraphim in the Lake of Acheron in God's presence.

²⁷² Exod. 24:12; 1Kgs 22:19-23; Isa. 6:1-13; Ezek. 2:1-7; Dan. 7:15-28. Cf Rev. 1:1, 11; 22:6-7, 10, 18-19.

4. The Seer's View of the Heavens.

a. Introduction.

Heaven in the Old Testament is most closely associated with God.²⁷³ This is his dwelling place where he is enthroned.²⁷⁴ There is also the notion of 'the heavens' [הַשָּׁמַיִם]²⁷⁵ and 'heaven of the heavens' [שָׁמַיִם הַשָּׁמַיִם].²⁷⁶ Thus, 'heaven of the heavens' is the actual abode of God, while 'the heavens' contain the sun, moon and stars, the winds, rain, snow and dew, the birds and also perhaps angels.²⁷⁷ The Book of Watchers appears to expand this view of heaven slightly by portraying a bi-compartmental heavenly abode. Thus, there is the reference to two houses in 1En. 14:10ff.²⁷⁸ This disposition to elaborate on the contents and the number of heavens was a very common feature of later Jewish and Christian literature.²⁷⁹

The most common number of heavens to be found in coeval and subsequently written literature to Revelation is that of three²⁸⁰ and seven.²⁸¹ The apostle Paul speaks of being caught up to the third heaven which he equates with Paradise²⁸² (2Cor. 12:2-4).²⁸³ 2En 8:1ff. [A,B] and GLAE 37:5; 40:1 also consider paradise and the third heaven²⁸⁴ to be equivalent but within a larger scheme of seven heavens (cf. 2En. 20:1ff [A]; GLAE 35:2).²⁸⁵ Other works, within a variety of literature, which contain seven heavens²⁸⁶ include: ApAbr. 19; Gedulat Moshe;

²⁷³ Gen. 24:7; 2Chron. 36:23; Ezra 1:2; Neh. 1:4; Job 1:16; Ps. 136:26; Dan. 2:18; Jonah 1:9; Tob. 10:11; Jdt. 5:8.

²⁷⁴ Deut. 26:15; 2Chron. 6:21,33; 30:27. Pss. 11:4; 103:19; 123:1; Isa. 66:1 (cf. Acts 7:49; Mat. 5:34; 23:22).

²⁷⁵ In the creation story this is referred to as 'the expanse of the heavens' [רָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם].

²⁷⁶ Deut. 10:14; 1Kgs. 8:27; 2Chron. 2:6; 6:18; Neh. 9:6. Cf. 1En. 1:4; 71:5.

²⁷⁷ The location, 'the heavens' could perhaps be split into two sections: the atmospheric heavens, and the celestial heavens.

²⁷⁸ 1 Enoch also relates cosmic tours (17-19, 21-26, 41, 43-44) which were probably the basis for later tour apocalypses e.g. 2 Enoch, 3 Baruch, Hebrew Apocalypse of Elijah, Gedulat Moshe, the Syriac Transitus Mariae.

²⁷⁹ The reason for this could have been the influence of Hellenistic cosmology with its concept of planetary spheres, but more likely it was an analogy of the temple with its various courts and its structure of a building inside of others.

²⁸⁰ The so-called Barbeloite Gnostic treatises of *Ap. John*, *Trim. Prot.*, *Allogenes*, *Steles Seth*, and *Zost.* contain the concept of a three-stage ascent to the deity. See Turner (1980) pp. 324-51.

²⁸¹ Other schemes do exist. In 3Bar. 2ff we find five heavens, but the journey is probably cut short. Under a secondary influence, 2 Enoch [J] 21-22 refers to ten heavens. The Gnostic *Apoc Paul* also has three extra heavens building on the Jewish concept of seven (the Jewish God is enthroned in the seventh), while the tractate *Rossi* has a total of fourteen. In the *Orig. World* 105: 23 and *Hyp. Arch* 95:34 there are eight heavens. In another Gnostic work *1 Apoc. Jas.* [V,3] it is suggested that the scriptures refer to seven heavens (26, 4-5) but this figure is wrong and the actual number is seventy-two (26, 16-18). For a possible explanation of the exegetical process used by the original writer to arrive at this particular number, see Schoedel (1970) pp. 118-29. For a discussion on the seven heavens in Jewish and Christian apocalypses, see Bauckham (1998) pp. 327ff. and Yarbrow Collins (1996) pp. 21-54.

²⁸² This is *contra* Bousset, (1901) [pg. 143] who suggests that they represent two separate regions.

²⁸³ The Apocalypse of Paul 19-20, under the influence of this text also links Paradise and the third heaven.

²⁸⁴ In ApSedr. 2:5, Sedrach is taken up to the third heaven where he finds himself in the presence of 'the flame of the divinity.'

²⁸⁵ Although it need not detain us here, it is possible that within the Jewish-apocalyptic tradition, the concept of a scheme of three heavens never existed as a separate system but rather paradise (or the third heaven) was always seen within the context of a seven heaven system. So, for example, Kee *OTP* 1 pg. 788 sees the vision of the Testament of Levi as originally including three heavens, that was later expanded to depict seven heavens. However see de Jonge (1975) pp. 46-52 and Hollander-de Jonge (1985) pp. 131-142.

²⁸⁶ Cf. QuEzra [A] 19ff which refers to 'seven camps and seven steps to the Divinity.' In the Christian Gnostic work *Gos Mary* 16:1-13 there is a heavenly ascent through three to seven 'powers of wrath'. The scheme of seven heavens became less popular in Christian literature after c. 200 A.D. This may be partly due to it being discredited by the Gnostic speculation about the seven heavens. So Bauckham (1998) pg. 328 nt. 58.

b. Hag. 12b and *AscIsa.* 9:6ff.²⁸⁷ The contents of these heavens vary considerably and can include a range of angelological, meteorological, astronomical, beneficial, and penal²⁸⁸ phenomena.

b. John's Experience.

Not only is John's ascent a simple affair, but this is also true for his view of heaven. His entrance into the throne-room is immediate. The notion of the seer passing through an extended series of heavens²⁸⁹ is totally absent. This seems to fit reasonably well with the Old Testament view of 'heaven' and the 'heaven of the heavens' or the 'highest heaven.' However it is difficult to confirm whether or not John knew of the system of a series of seven heavens. There is an interesting section in the Apocalypse of Abraham (*ApAbr.* 15-16), where like John, Abraham seems to ascend to the heavenly throne-room, but it becomes clear later that in doing so he has traversed the seven heavens that now he sees below him (*ApAbr.* 19:4). John certainly knows of lower heavens where, for example, angels dwell (*Rev.* 12:7ff.). 'It would seem, therefore, much more likely that the author has consciously chosen to describe his ascent in simple terms, and that the description of multiple heavenly layers simply forms no part of his purpose (or perhaps no part of his religious experience).'²⁹⁰ The difference between John and the authors of many of the apocalypses is not so much whether these lower heavens exist, but whether there is any interest in their contents as part of the revelation to the seer. Thus for John, he has little interest in the lower heavens, rather his overwhelming focus is on the throne-room itself to which we will now turn our attention.

²⁸⁷ The seven heavens in this text are similar to the seven palaces of later Hekhalot literature. See Bauckham (1993) pp. 140-149. Cf. also SoSS 4Q403 1 ii line 10 which refers to 'the seven lofty holy places' and SoSS 4Q403 1 ii line 21 which speaks of 'seven wonderful precincts.'

²⁸⁸ See, particularly Himmelfarb (1983).

²⁸⁹ John uses οὐρανός over fifty times. It is only once within these references that the plural number is encountered (*Rev.* 12:12) the entire remainder is singular. Within this group the meaning can be 'sky' *Rev.* 6:13,14; 8:10; 9:1; 11:6; 12:1,3,4,7,8; 13:13; 16:21; 20:11 (the term ἐν μεσσοῦρανι [in mid-heaven] is also used three times *Rev.* 8:13; 14:6; 19:17). However the majority of the references relate to God's abode, his throne-room.

²⁹⁰ Hurtado (1985) pg. 111.

III Worship of the Heavenly Sovereign [Revelation 4].

A. The Throne and its Occupant.

John's first glimpse within the throne-room reveals its pre-eminent focal point - a throne and its Occupant [θρόνος καὶ καθήμενος]. This is significant, because even although it is surrounded by various strata of heavenly beings and furnishings, his inaugural sight is that of the throne.¹ It portrays the sense of an elevated position.² This confirms its primary and central role within his vision. It is in fact a key motif throughout the whole book. The throne represents cosmic sovereignty, and the One seated on it orchestrates and executes this role.³ The throne of God was also a crucial symbol of Jewish monotheism in the Second Temple Period and as such it was the representation of the sui generis characteristics which belong only to the divine identity.⁴ These attributes include being the absolute potentate, mentioned above, which stems from the fact that God is, solely, the Creator of all things (because he 'created *all* things, and by [his] will they existed and were created' [Rev. 4:11b]). On account of these characteristics, it is God, and the Divine exclusively, who is worthy of worship. We shall return to this subject when we consider the investiture and worship of the Lamb.

1. The Throne.

Although the throne has great symbolic significance, there are no details describing the actual throne itself. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is not to distract from the importance of its Occupant. Just as an emergency exit sign is only significant because an escape-route exists, so because the throne is purely a sign, it is what is signalled, rather than the sign itself, that is important. This lack of an elaborate description of God's throne was fairly typical of Jewish and Christian literature.⁵ In fact it is ironic that far more lavish descriptions are often given to the thrones of patriarchs,⁶ apostles⁷ and angels.⁸

a. Its Static Condition.

However, one characteristic of the throne which seems to be evident is that it would appear to be completely static. In this context, there appear to have been various developments of this feature of the divine throne. An ancient Jewish tradition saw YHWH soaring across the heavens, mounted on a cherub or cherubim.⁹ Ezekiel's visions envisage the cherubim forming

¹ This is consistent with the visions in 1Kgs. 22:19 [2Chron.18:18]; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 10:1 and EzekTrag. 68.

However in Ezekiel's introductory vision he builds to the climax of the throne with its vague, seated, humanoid form in Ezek. 1:26-28.

² The texts, Exod. 24:10 [Tg. Ps-Jon & Tg. Onq]; Isa. 6:1; Jer. 17:12; TMos. 4:2; Ezek. 1:26; 1En. 14:18; 2En. [J] 20:3; *Hek. Zut.* §418; *Ma'aseh Merk.* §556 all portray this idea of an elevated throne.

³ See Rev. 5:1ff; 6:16; 7:9ff; 8:3; 12:5; 14:3; 16:17; 19:4ff; 20:11ff; 21:3ff; 22:1ff. Sweet (1979) [pg. 117] comments that this 'symbol of his sovereignty is a constant point of origin and reference in what follows.'

⁴ This has been ably demonstrated by Bauckham (1999) pp. 43-69.

⁵ Ezek. 1:26; 10:1 describe a throne like a sapphire. 1En.18:8 refers to God's throne as being made of emeralds and sapphires (a small fragment found at Qumran [Enoch C 1 VIII 27] refers to the throne of sapphire). Earlier in the Book of Watchers (1En. 14:18) 'its appearance was like crystals of ice.' The judgment seat mentioned in Rev. 20: 11 is described as great and white. However these would appear to be the exception rather than the rule. Probably the only other main feature of the throne, in general, which occurs quite frequently, is its association with fire. This is a topic to which we shall return later.

⁶ In the Testament of Job (33:30), his throne has splendour and majesty. Adam sits on a golden throne in TAbR [A] 11:4. In Ged. Mos. 57ff, there are various thrones all made of precious stones for Abraham, Isaac and the righteous.

⁷ In GBart. Fol 18b the apostles have thrones 'which are [made of] pearls of light', and 'are set with real stones (i.e. stones of price) and topazes and emeralds, which light up brilliantly the whole city of Christ.'

⁸ In ApZeph A, the angels called 'lords' have thrones which were 'sevenfold more (brilliant) than the light of the rising sun.'

⁹ 2Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10; cf. Pss. 68:4, 35; 104:3; Isa. 19:1; 1En. 52:1; GLAE 38:3. There is also frequent reference to a 'chariot of cherubim' or a 'throne of cherubim', see 1Chron. 28:18; Sir. 49:8; Azah. 32; GLAE 22:3; *Hyp. Arch* 95.27.

a separate wheeled-platform above which was situated a throne capable of movement. It is evident from Ezekiel's visions that God could move around the cosmos. The Ladder of Jacob (2:7) is clearly dependent on this vision and here God is portrayed as 'sitting firmly on the cherubim, and the fiery throne of glory.. and the many-eyed (ones).' This is also the case in the Gnostic work *On the Origin of the World* (105.1-4) where Sabaoth creates a huge throne 'upon a four-faced chariot called "Cherubim."' ¹⁰ In Daniel's very influential vision (Dan.7) the thrones, ¹¹ including God's, were set up [רמי]. So now in this vision it appears that the throne does not have any intrinsic mobility, however it does still retain the vestigial 'wheels' ¹² like burning fire' (Dan.7:9). Alongside this development there was also an early conception of a fixed heavenly throne. Isaiah, in his vision (Isa. 6:1) sees a 'high and lofty throne' ¹³ and there is no indication at all of the potential for any sort of movement. This is also the case with the other Old Testament throne scenes of Job 1&2 and 1 Kings 24. As we indicated at the beginning of this paragraph, Revelation follows this last position. The throne is perceived by John to be fixed ¹⁴ in heaven. There is no inkling of mobility (cf. 2En. 1a: 4 'the immovable throne of the LORD'). It is true that in the progressive episodes of the vision there are changing backdrops and locations, however the throne has no motile potential. ¹⁵ Although there are virtually no descriptive features of the throne mentioned in this vision, other than it is static and that it is in a very prominent position, there are more graphic details given of its immediate surroundings.

b. The Encircling Rainbow.

As the rainbow 'exceedingly beautiful in its brightness, encircles the sky with its glorious arc' ¹⁶ so too the throne in Revelation is begirded by a resplendent emerald-like iris. Here, there is a clear echo of Ezekiel 1:26-28 which refers to 'the bow in a cloud on a rainy day' which surrounded the throne with the appearance like sapphire. ¹⁷ In the twelfth song of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* there is also a similar description given of the environment around the enthroned God. In 4Q405 405 22 10-11 we read, 'And (there are) works of [r]adiance with glorious mingled colors, wondrously hued, brightly blended.' These descriptions accentuate the aesthetic qualities of the throne and its enveloping irradiance. Our passage, here in Revelation, quite probably was influenced by the narrative of God's universal Noahic covenant (Gen. 9:13ff) where the rainbow served as a reminder of the covenant to God himself. ¹⁸ So the throne which symbolised absolute sovereignty is inextricably associated with the rainbow, a sign of mercy and peace. The consequent sequences of judgments through the book which are soon to

¹⁰ In ApMary [6] 2nd bk, 'the disciples sat upon eleven thrones, and the thrones were placed on chariots.'

However, of more interest to us here is the reference in ApAbr. 18:12 where there is the picture of the 'chariot with fiery wheels' parked beside the throne ready for use. Thus it portrays the heavenly throne and God's mode of transport through the cosmos as two completely separate entities.

¹¹ There is no insight given to who if anyone sits on the other thrones. In the Falasha work, Te' Ezaza Sanbat, when God comes on the last day, he will be 'seated upon His twelve thrones to judge.'

¹² The word used here in Dan. 7:9 is the Aramaic גלגל which corresponds to the Hebrew לגלגל in Ezek. 10:2,6, and not the more common האופנים found in Ezek. 1 & 10 which by a process of animation became the class of angels called ophanim.

¹³ Enoch (1En. 14:18) see a lofty throne, however the wheels are still present. Cf. 44Q 405 frg. 20-22 ii 9; 2En. [J] 20:3.

¹⁴ ἐκεῖτο is the imperfect middle indicative of κείμαι (to set). See TDNT III pg. 654.

¹⁵ This is even the case in the judgment scene vision (Rev. 20:4ff) which is clearly based on Daniel 7 (which refers to the throne having wheels).

¹⁶ Sir. 43:11-12.

¹⁷ Cf. Exod. 24:10 which refers to a 'pavement of sapphire stone' in the vision of Moses and his companions. Montgomery (1926) [pp. 74-5] proposes a rather obscure link here with the word usually translated 'electrum' [חשמל]. This is based on a citation in Field's apparatus at Ezek. 1:4 from ὁ Ἑβραῖος, i. e., the Hebrew Interpreter.

¹⁸ Some would question this interpretation. So, for example, Beckwith (1919) pg. 497; Rowland (1998) pg. 592. However, Beasley-Murray (1974) [pg. 113] notes that the comparison of the rainbow to 'smaragd' 'has suggested to some that the latter was a rock crystal, which served as a prism and so yielded the rainbow colours. In that case the primary reference in this passage is to the rainbow as a reminder of the covenant of God with humanity, made after the flood, that the waters would never again be permitted to destroy his creatures (Gen. 9:8ff).'

unfold, have to be illuminated in this light. 'It tells us that there is to be no triumph for God's sovereignty at the expense of his mercy.'¹⁹ In later Jewish writings (*b. Hag.* 16a; *Gen. R.* 35:3), rabbinic thought perceived the rainbow as a revelation of the Divine Glory,²⁰ and so it demands befitting reverence.²¹ This interpretation would not be out of place in John's usage of this symbolism.

c. The Sound and Light Effects.

The sound and light effects emanating from the throne (Rev. 4:5), - flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder²² - betoken the power and majesty of its Occupant. These phenomena are reminiscent of the Sinai narrative (Exod. 19:16; 20:18; cf. Pss. 18:13-15; 29:3-9; Job 37:2-5; Jub. 2:2) where the impressive traditional accompaniments of a theophany were experienced. This establishes the throne of God on 'the immutable and inexorable moral law.'²³ John's use of these features here within the throne-room would appear to be a very rare feature. However, one of the common components of the theophanic appearances, fire, is noteworthy here by its absence. We will consider this omission later.

2. The One Seated on the Throne.

a. The Title.

The designation, *The One Seated on the Throne* is one of the four main descriptive titles given to God in Revelation.²⁴ The other three are: i) *The Alpha and the Omega* which appears appropriately in the first and last chapters of the book (Rev. 1:8; 22:13).²⁵ ii) *The One Who is and Who was and Who is to Come* which appears in this inaugural vision (Rev. 4:8) and four more times with variation in the book.²⁶ iii) *The Lord God the Almighty* occurs seven times throughout the book,²⁷ and this also includes a reference within this vision, in the same verse (Rev. 4:8). Our title here, *The One Seated on the Throne*, is the one used most prolifically by John. It occurs with variations, six times within this first vision (Rev. 4:2,3,9; 5:1,7,13) and a further six times throughout the book.²⁸ Thus, with half of the total references appearing within this inaugural vision, there is a large emphasis on the ultimate sovereignty of God.

b. His Description.

Perhaps it would be more appropriate to refer to the lack of the description of God at this stage in the book. With frugality of vocabulary, John describes the One on the throne only as resembling jasper and carnelian stones [λίθω ἰάσπιδι καὶ σαρδίω].²⁹ However there is

¹⁹ Caird (1966) pg. 63.

²⁰ Albeit, according to the rabbi, this likeness was very faint and is described 'as straw resembles the grain.'

²¹ See Ford (1975) pg. 71; Halperin (1980) pp. 21-22; (1988) pp. 255-6. In *Hek. Zut.* §353, the *hayyot ha-qodesh* are described as being like the appearance of the rainbow in the cloud, and thus they would appear to be reflecting the appearance of God.

²² This audio-visual display appears, in an increasingly expanding form, throughout the book in Rev. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18. For a discussion on this feature, see Bauckham (1993) pp. 7-8, 202-204; (1993A) pp. 41-43; Giblin (1998) pp. 508-510.

²³ Caird (1966) pg. 68 and also Sweet (1979) pg. 118.

²⁴ For a discussion of these important titles, see Bauckham (1993A) pp. 25-35.

²⁵ The first reference is to God (Rev. 1:8), while significantly the last is to Christ (Rev. 22:13). It also occurs the first time God speaks within John's throne-visions (Rev. 21:6). For its relationship to the similar titles 'the first and the last' and 'the beginning and the end,' see Bauckham (1993A) pp. 25-28, 54-58.

²⁶ Rev. 1:4, 8; 11:17; 16:5.

²⁷ Rev. 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; 21:21. The shorter form 'God the Almighty' is found in Rev. 16:14; 19:15.

²⁸ Rev. 6:16; 7:10,15; 19:4; 20:11; 21:5.

²⁹ With many of these precious stones it is difficult to recover their exact identity and significance. Here, the main thrust appears to be the emphasis of the holy and numinous characteristics of the Divine. So, in Exod. 28:17-20 the high priest's breastplate was encrusted in precious stones, and in Ezek. 28:12-14 precious stones represent the former Edenic glory of the king of Tyre. In Rev. 21:10-21 the New Jerusalem is portrayed as being bedecked with jewels symbolising the transcendent permanence of the celestial realm. See further IBD pp 781-89 and DBI, pp. 451-452.

purpose in his brevity, it is part of his initial depiction of God as a transcendent being. At this point there is no reference to any anthropomorphic features of the One seated on the throne. However these will start to appear later on throughout the Apocalypse. Throne-visions appear to fall into two distinct camps when it comes to the description of the One seated on the throne: i) those which give God anthropomorphic features, and ii) those which make either no attempt to describe God or only do so in rather abstract terms.

i) Anthropomorphic Attributes.

The throne-scenes of the Hebrew Bible generally fit into this group. In most of them God himself communicates directly.³⁰ In Exod. 24:10-11, there is mention of the feet and hands of God. Ezekiel 1:26 describes the appearance of a human-like form,³¹ while Isaiah (Isa. 6:1) refers to 'the hem of his robe.' Daniel's vision (Dan. 7:9) goes even further and describes the Ancient of Days, his hair and clothing.³² The description in this last vision also had an influence on later Jewish literature.³³ Thus the Ethiopic work, *Lives of the Prophets: Daniel*, concludes, "I saw the Ancient of Days, and the hair of his head (was) white like wool."³⁴ While, 1 Enoch 71:10 describes the 'Chief of Days,'³⁵ his head was white and pure as wool, and his raiment indescribable.³⁶

However this trend in the Hebrew Bible was not reflected in its translations. It is well documented that the Targumic literature has a strong tendency to raise God above the mundane in his characteristics and actions, thus protecting his transcendence. M. McNamara³⁷ has noted that this trend could already be found in the Elohistic source of the Pentateuch, the book of Chronicles and the ancient Septuagint. This effect can be clearly seen in the relevant throne-scenes found in the Targums³⁸ and the LXX.³⁹ Thus, these translations would attempt to erase many of the anthropomorphic descriptions of God. This leads us to the second group of throne-visions where there is no description of God, or only one which is in abstract terms.

ii) Abstract or Missing Descriptions.

Some throne-scenes simply omit any description of God. In the Old Testament, Micaiah saw the Lord on his throne but no description is given (1 Kgs. 22:19). This is also the case in Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6. Levi saw the Most High in TLevi 5:1 but does not elucidate. In the Apocalypse of Abraham 18, while there is a comprehensive description of the four living creatures, the passage omits any portrayal of God, even although his worship is one of the main themes. Similarly, the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (4Q403 1 ii 1-16; 4Q405 20-22 ii 1-14), which often echoes Ezekiel 1, makes no mention to any semblance of a human form, concentrating rather on the depiction of the throne and particularly its surroundings.⁴⁰ However it not really possible to argue whether this absence is of significance or not.

³⁰ Exod. 24:9-11; 1 Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; Isa. 6:1-13; Ezek. 2:1ff.

³¹ In later *Hekhalot* literature, the *Shi'ur Qomah* tradition attributed to God massive human dimensions. See, Halperin (1988) pp. 405-407; Schäfer (1992) pp. 60, 99-103, 149-150. See Quispel (1980) for an examination of this verse in the context of later Jewish mysticism and Gnosis.

³² For a discussion on the subject of God's garment in later *Hekhalot* literature, see Scholem (1960) pp. 56-64.

³³ There was also an influence on Gnostic literature. So, for instance, the figure of the "Ancient of Days" is found in the Gnostic treatise, *Rossi* where the Father is enthroned on high, robed in white, with a crown of pearls upon his venerable head (for translation see Kropp (1930-31) II pp. 175ff.). Another Gnostic work, *Apoc. Paul.* 22. 24-27 refers to an old man on his throne with a white garment, in the seventh heaven.

³⁴ Knibb (1980) pg. 206.

³⁵ Cf. IEn. 46:2; 47:3; 48:2.

³⁶ Cf. IEn. 14:20; 47:3.

³⁷ McNamara (1972) pg. 33.

³⁸ Thus, for example, in Ezek. 1:1 'visions of God' becomes 'the vision of the glory of the Shekinah of the Lord,' and Ezek. 1:27 twice refers to "from the appearance of his loins" which becomes 'an appearance of glory which the eye could not look at and which it was impossible to contemplate.'

³⁹ So, for instance, in Exod. 24:10 'under his feet,' becomes 'the place where God stood' and there is no mention of his hand. In Isa. 6:1, there is no mention of God's robes, but rather 'the house was full of his glory.'

⁴⁰ We should probably note here that the extant texts are quite fragmentary.

There was, in the Hebrew Bible, another concept that God could not be seen, so as to protect the potential observer from death (Exod. 33:20).⁴¹ Closely related to this was the idea found in later works that the sight of God was unbearable (1En. 14:21; QuEzra [A] 25-26) or at least indescribable (2En. [J] 22:1ff.).⁴²

Another tradition proposed that God could not be seen due to the fact that he was clothed in a garment of light (Ps. 104:2).⁴³ From this early Jewish tradition developed the concept that his complete appearance constituted light which produced a blinding glory (1Tim. 6:16; 1Jn. 1:5; cf. Jn 1:7-9; 3:19-21).⁴⁴ God's description in Rev. 4:3, as looking like jasper and carnelian, obviously then fits in well with this last category. This depiction of God as a cynosural entity leads us on to our next subject, the degree of divine transcendence emanating from this part of the throne-scene in chapter four.

*c. His Transcendence.*⁴⁵

From the outset of his vision in chapter 4, John describes a scene for the reader that stresses the transcendence of God which is augmented by his sovereignty. This is implemented from his pre-eminent position on his throne. So, we are confronted by a God whose description is devoid of anthropomorphic terms but rather emphasises his dazzling glory. In the immediate vicinity of the throne is an iridescent radiance, and moving out from the throne are various strata of heavenly beings and furnishings which give the sense of increasing separation and detachment of the One who is seated on the throne. The purpose of this early emphasis on God's transcendence is to asseverate clearly that God is far beyond, in fact completely separate from, the reach of the mundane forces of the Roman military machine.⁴⁶ God is in his heaven where his sovereignty is absolute. But, as shall be seen presently, the remedial process will be set in motion which will eventually bring *all* creation under his benevolent control. However, for the moment, we must examine a little more closely the seer's comprehension of the transcendence of God.

As we have already seen at this initial stage in his vision, it is essential from John's theological viewpoint, to emphasize the transcendence of God. However, we will demonstrate that John starts from a position of what we will classify as 'moderate transcendence'. To assist us in this task we need to consider the classic and approximately contemporary Gnostic myth,⁴⁷ where the actual transcendence of God is often portrayed as an 'ultra-transcendence.' B. A. Pearson⁴⁸ lists ten features of Gnosticism, the second of which is 'a characteristic *theology* according to which there is a transcendent supreme God beyond the gods or powers responsible for the world in which we live.' It has often been called a 'negative theology' because the true God is shrouded

⁴¹ See Gruenwald (1980) [pp. 93-97] for an evaluation of the rabbinic discussion on whether it was possible to see God or not. See also Schäfer (1992) pp. 15-21, 57-60, 127.

⁴² In the later *Hekhalot* literature it was possible to see God - see Chernus (1982) [pp. 123-46] for discussion and references - however this was balanced by the potential of an awful fate awaiting those who were not qualified to do so.

⁴³ This verse was to stimulate much rabbinic comment. So, in *Gen. R.* 3:4, R. Samuel said: 'The Holy One, blessed be He, wrapped Himself in it [ie created light] as in a garment and the splendour of His Glory shone forth from one end of the world to the other.'

⁴⁴ Another notion closely related to this was that the Divinity had the appearance of fire. See Ezek. 1:27; LadJac. 1:4; 2:17; ApAbr. 17:11,15; LLAe 25:3; 29:5; 2En [J] 22:1; ApSedr. 2:5; QuEzra (A) 26; *Hek.Rab.* §159.

⁴⁵ For our definition of transcendence see above on page 1 nt. 1.

⁴⁶ Mauchline (1962) [pg. 89], when considering Isaiah's dating of his vision to the death of King Uzziah, suggests that it is not completely fanciful to see the contrast between the death of the earthly king and the Lord who is 'high and mighty', exalted in power and glory above the earth, untouched by the limitations of finite man; not subjected to man's mortality - the exalted, transcendent God, maker and ruler of all. It is only Isaiah who dates important events from a sovereign's death and whether this was in the mind of the author or not we cannot say, but it would certainly fits John's thinking here.

⁴⁷ This corresponded closely to much of the Platonic philosophical discussion about God in the 2nd cent. A.D.

⁴⁸ Pearson (1990) pp. 7-8.

in 'alpha-privatives'.⁴⁹ He is 'ineffable, invisible, incomprehensible, unbegotten, without beginning and without end, incorruptible, immeasurable, invariable, unnameable, etc.'⁵⁰ There are a substantial number of the Nag Hammadi texts which contain large repetitive sections of such apophatic descriptions of God, the main ones being: *The Apocryphon of John*, *Allogenes*, *Eugnostos the Blessed*, *The Gospel of Truth*, *The Sophia of Jesus Christ*, *The Tripartite Tractate* and *Zostrianos*.⁵¹ So, although John promotes the absolute transcendence of God, it is clearly very different from this Gnostic extreme. The dazzling effect may prohibit the observer from gaining an insight into the actual form, the *morphe* of God at this stage, but the gleaming resplendence of the precious stones and the rainbow produce a more positive and moderated transcendence. In fact, there are other signs, even within this chapter, with its focus on transcendence, which point to a yet more moderate position. However our uncovering of these clues will have to wait until the other contents of the throne-room are now studied.

B. Items in Close Proximity to the Throne.

In close proximity to the throne are two main items 'the seven flaming torches' [ἐπτὰ λαμπάδες πυρὸς καίόμεναι] (Rev. 4:5), and the 'sea of glass, like crystal' [θάλασσα ὑαλίνη ὁμοία κρυστάλλῳ] (Rev. 4:6). They are closely associated with each other by their position in the throne-room which is described as being 'in front of the throne' [ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου]. Both of these motifs will be developed later on in the book, when the reason for their close affiliation will become clearer. However for now we will discuss them within the context of Rev. 4.

1. The Seven Flaming Torches.

Situated in front of the throne are seven blazing lamps which John identifies as the seven spirits of God [τὰ ἐπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ]. Within the book of Revelation they are linked back to the prologue (Rev. 1:4) and also forward to Rev. 5:6 where they are equated with the 'seven horns and seven eyes' which are intrinsically associated with the Lamb. Their background has been variously interpreted.⁵² Some commentators have understood them to be the seven chief angels within traditional Jewish angelology who stand before God in heaven (Tob. 12:15; 1En. 20:1-8; cf. *OnOrgWld* 150.10-11).⁵³ However this is discordant with their inclusion within the trinitarian greeting noted above (Rev. 1:4). Also, John does make reference to these seven angels receiving seven trumpets (Rev. 8:2) and from the context it is clear that they are

⁴⁹ It is probably strictly true to observe that the 'alpha-privatives' are really Platonic - another part of Gnosticism's debt to Platonism. Additionally, these terms were also used by Jewish authors such as Philo (who drew them from Platonic sources), in the Sybylline Oracles, in apocalypses (e.g. ApAbr. 17:9), by the early Christian Apologists, and of course also by the New Testament writers e.g. (Col. 1:15; 1Tim. 1:17; 6:16; Heb. 11:27). However, as we will mention presently our main point here is the profuse usage of these terms in this literature.

⁵⁰ Broek, van den (1996) pg. 10.

⁵¹ It should be noted, however, that Williams (1997) [pp. 20, 44] argues that 'negative theology' is not ubiquitous among the Gnostic myths and that 'the number of such sources in which one encounters any significant amount of negative theological discourse is relatively limited.' Where it is found he suggests that rather than it being verbose repetition, these sections are 'formulated with discernible patterns and structures that imply some interest in the usefulness of rational argument.' He concludes that with this material, 'What needs to be seen is the far more protracted, more complex experience of knowing God that seems often implied in these myths - an experience stretched out over important and informative stages, levels, and media that are as integral to the total experience of knowing as is the realization of God's unknowability.'

⁵² Cabaniss (1953) [pg. 82] has the obscure suggestion that 'the lamps at once call to mind the famous letter of Pliny to Trajan which states that the Christians were accustomed to meet before dawn [Pliny's words are *ante lucem*], hence the need for artificial lights.' In Tabr. [A] 4:3, confronted with the presence of Michael, Abraham says to Isaac, 'Light seven lamps filled with oil that we may make merry, because this man who is staying as our guest today is more honorable than kings and rulers.'

⁵³ Cf. 'the seven angelic princes' in 4Q403 frag. 1 1.1-29, and 4Q403 frag. 1 2.18-48, and also the seven angelic priestly councils in 4Q403 frag. 1 2.22.

completely different entities.⁵⁴ Other commentators, more plausibly, have seen an allusion to the 'torches which move to and fro among the living creatures' (Ezek.1:13).⁵⁵ A more probable influence would have been the golden menorah associated with the holy of holies of the tabernacle and temple.⁵⁶ However, the Old Testament passage which undoubtedly has a bearing on John's use of this terminology (seven torches, seven spirits and seven eyes) is Zech. 4:1-14. Through John's exegesis of this passage, the seven spirits should be understood as the divine Spirit.⁵⁷

This also fits well with one of the New Testament's description of the divine Spirit. Although this is not a common portrayal, there are occasions where the Holy Spirit is depicted as fire or connected with it. Within the context of baptism the Holy Spirit is associated with fire (Mat. 3:11 [Lk. 3:16]).⁵⁸ The phenomena of 'tongues of fire' were part of the apostles' Pentecostal experience of the Spirit's presence (Acts 2:3). In 1Thess. 5:19 there is warning against putting out (the fire) [σβέννυτε] of the Spirit.

Finally, it should be noted that the torches serve as the only representation, within this introductory vision, of the fire motif - a topic to which we will return.

2. The Sea of Glass.

a. Introduction.

The belief that the heavenly realms contained a body of water was quite a common one in the Jewish tradition. At the creation (Gen. 1:7-8) the waters are separated above and below the 'expanse' [רקיע] which is identified as the 'heavens' [שמים].⁵⁹ During his extra-terrestrial journey, Levi sees 'hanging water' between the first and second heavens (TLevi. 2:7).⁶⁰ In the Greek Life of Adam and Eve (GLAE 37:3), Adam's body is washed three times by one of the seraphim in the Lake of Acheron in the presence of God.⁶¹ Later Christian works continue this notion of a heavenly sea. So in the Apocalypse of Paul (ApPaul 22-23), he sees the Lake of Acherusia⁶² where the repentant ungodly are baptised by the angel Michael so that they can enter the city of Christ.⁶³ Also in the Gospel of Bartholomew (GBart. Fol. 18b), his soul is baptised three times in the Lake Akherousia. In the Mysteries of Saint John the Apostle and Holy Virgin, there is a closer parallel with Revelation, where in the seventh heaven there is a great fountain of water like a sea (MystJn. Fol. 7b). However, we will see that John's actual use of this motif of a sea of glass appears to be unique.

⁵⁴ Within the Qumran library and also elsewhere, 'spirits' often denote 'angels', however this is incompatible with John's use of this terminology. This was also the case with much of the early Christian literature.

⁵⁵ Ford (1975) pg. 73; Rowland (1979) pg. 147; Halperin (1988) pg. 90.

⁵⁶ Exod. 25:31-40; 27:20-21; 30:7-8; 37:17-24; Lev. 24:1-4; Num. 8:1-4; 1Macc. 1:21; 4:49.

⁵⁷ For a detailed discussion of John's usage and development of this passage, see in particular Bauckham (1993) pp. 162-166 and (1993A) pp. 110-115.

⁵⁸ This is a debated passage: Are the fire and the Spirit to be equated or distinguished? Does the fire refer to the fire of judgment? Nevertheless there is some connection between the Holy Spirit and fire. See Hagner (1993) [pp. 51-52] for a recent discussion of positions.

⁵⁹ These verses produced rabbinic discussion on the so-called *Ma'aseh Bereshit* found in *b.Hag* 15a and *Gen R.* 4:3 for example. Cf. also, Jub. 2:4; Ps. 148:4; 1En. 54:8; 2En. [J] 27; TAdam 1:5; ApMary [6] 5th Bk; MystJn. Fol.4a; Zos II; Fal. Pray. 10 & 11.

⁶⁰ 2En. [J] 3:3 refers to a 'vast ocean' visible in (from?) the first heaven. In 3Bar 10:2 there is a lake of water.

⁶¹ In the Latin version of this work, *Vita Adae et Evae*, there is a reference (LLAE 29:2) to waters around Paradise which Michael, the archangel touches with a rod causing them to freeze. However the Paradise here is most probably the terrestrial one.

⁶² Cf. SibOr 2.338; ApPet 14. Bartholomew's soul is baptised 3 times in the Lake Akherousia in GBart Fol.18b.

⁶³ Cf. ApZos 2 where the wall of water that links earth to heaven cannot be negotiated by mortals (cf. 3Bar. 2:1).

b. Interpretation.

The sea of glass has been interpreted in various ways, including as a mere decoration,⁶⁴ a forgotten image from a bygone era, the abyss, and temple furniture.⁶⁵ The first pair can be dismissed without comment, however the second two deserve our attention.

i) The abyss. G. B. Caird has made much of the idea that the heavenly sea of glass is a reservoir of evil⁶⁶ and G. K. Beale,⁶⁷ with his great emphasis on the Danielic influence on the throne-room scene in particular and on the book of Revelation generally, also warms to this viewpoint. However, the first step in establishing the identity of the "sea" in Revelation is to note carefully its location. The sea of glass, mentioned three times in Revelation (Rev. 4:6 & 15:2 [2X]), is situated in heaven. All the other references to the "sea" are clearly placed on earth. This latter group, then, includes, the watery lair of the multi-headed beast (Rev. 13:1),⁶⁸ a repository for the dead (Rev. 20:13), and the oceans traversed by mariners (Rev. 18:17,19), whose contents are progressively destroyed (Rev. 8:8,9; 16:3). The earth and sea are clearly linked in Rev. 10:2,5,8 when the mighty angel straddles them and they are distinctly differentiated from 'heaven and what is in it' in Rev. 10:6. Therefore it is incorrect to associate the *heavenly* sea of glass with the *earthly* sea whose characteristics have just been described.⁶⁹ It would be incongruous to envisage an ambivalent force stationed in the throne-room where 'God's sovereignty is seen as it is already fully acknowledged in heaven.'⁷⁰ In the Old Testament the occasional malevolent presence does make an appearance in heaven ('the Satan' in Job 1:6ff; 2:1ff. and 'a lying spirit' in 1 Kgs. 22:21), but they are always depicted as being transient. There is no suggestion of them being a fixed component of the throne-room as is the case with the sea of glass. The description of 'the war in heaven' (Rev. 12:7-10) also highlights the incongruity of evil remaining in heaven when the great dragon and his henchmen are defeated and expelled to earth by Michael and his righteous forces.⁷¹ Lastly, the description 'of glass, like crystal'⁷² hardly exudes the characteristics of chaos of the deep, but rather portrays a pleasant setting of picturesque tranquillity.⁷³

⁶⁴ Sweet (1979) [pg. 119] highlights the story in the Quran (xxvii) where the Queen of Sheba has to hoist up her skirt, to cross the pavement of glass in front of King Solomon's throne.

⁶⁵ These have been suggested singly or as a combination of them both.

⁶⁶ Caird (1962) pp. 103-5 and Caird (1966) pp. 65-68. See also Halperin (1988) pp. 93-96, 450.

⁶⁷ Beale (1999) pp. 323-324.

⁶⁸ This section clearly alludes to Dan. 7:2ff which is also firmly fixed on earth.

⁶⁹ Cf. 1 En. 17:5 & ApPaul 21 where it is possible to see from the heavens the Ocean which surrounds the earth.

⁷⁰ Bauckham (1993A) pg. 31. Simon (1958) [pg. 42] notes that the heavens in the Ascension of Isaiah 'are wholly without taint of evil, probably because Christ has cleansed the Heavens.'

⁷¹ However this battle, most probably, did not take place in the heavenly throne room, but rather in the 'sky.' This is certainly the meaning of 'heaven' which is used three times earlier in this chapter (vs. 1, 3, 4). To envisage the 'sky' as the combat zone, we must firstly note the curriculum vitae of the great dragon in Rev. 12:9. He is 'that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and the Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.' These names describe the great dragon in primordial and ancient mythological terms which relate to his existence after his 'fall' (See Gen. 3:1ff; Job. 1:7; 2:2; Lk. 10:18; Eph. 2:2; 6:12; 2 En. [J] 29:3-5). So, after his expulsion from the throne-room, the realm of his operations includes only the sky and earth. This interpretation would also solve the continuity problem between Rev. 12:1-6 where the great dragon is located on earth and Rev. 12:7-9 where he is in 'heaven.' Thus the sequence of events in the narrative would be as follows: the child and dragon are on earth, the child is taken to God, the dragon attempts to follow, Michael intercepts and the dragon, with the stopwatch running against him, is now relegated and limited to the earth. Finally, it is noteworthy that when the child is taken into the presence of God, there is no mention of 'heaven' but rather it is 'to God and to his throne' (v. 5).

⁷² Its vitreous appearance probably stems from Ezekiel's description of the heavenly expanse in Ezekiel 1:22 (LXX κρυσταλλος cf. Exod. 24:10). Some see this source as the main influence, but the sea of Rev. 4 is a localised item, rather more than just a nebulous description.

⁷³ Sweet (1979) [pg. 119] suggests that the interpretation of the sea as the abyss might flounder on the beauty and purity expressed by its description. Cf. Rev. 21:11,18,21; 22:1. Thus, Halperin (1988) pg. 94 is wrong to suggest that 'the glass sea seems mainly a sinister symbol.'

ii) Temple Furniture.

This is the most plausible background in light of the large influence that the tabernacle and the temple had on John's portrayal of heaven. The 'bronze laver' [כִּיּוֹר נְחֹשֶׁת] is described in Exod. 30:17-21 as one of the items associated with the tabernacle.⁷⁴ This basin was replaced by a vast bronze cauldron referred to as 'the molten sea' [הַיָּם מוֹצֵק] (1Kgs. 7:23) which, along with ten moveable lavers, was a prominent feature of Solomon's temple. John appears to have drawn on these items in his picture of the sea of glass. Thus they were both positioned in the front of the sanctuary as is the sea of glass. They were for the exclusive use of the priests before they entered and ministered in the sanctuary. On a functional level they were receptacles in which the priests washed themselves (Exod. 30:18-21; 2Chron. 4:6). Symbolically these ablutions were part of the ritual involved in the approach to God - a God who required absolute cleanness of heart and life on the part of those who approached Him in worship. The main aspect was the holiness of God which represented his essential nature.⁷⁵ The tabernacle (Exod. 40:9), and the temple (1Chron. 29:3; Pss. 5:7; 79:1; 138:2; Isa. 64:11) were holy⁷⁶ because they represented the abode of YHWH.⁷⁷ The priests neglected this ceremonial procedure at the peril of their lives.⁷⁸ In Exod. 30:20-21 there is the dire warning that they were under the penalty of death if they failed to wash.⁷⁹

This background, then, fits well with the sea of glass being considered as signifying 'the distance between God and his creatures even in heaven,'⁸⁰ 'conveying God's ineffable, absolute holiness - holiness in its original sense of *separateness*'⁸¹ and thus 'creating for the Seer an unspeakably heightened sense of the transcendence and majesty of God.'⁸² Thus it is probably best to identify the sea, on the one hand, as symbolising the transcendence of God, while on the other hand, to regard it as the future potential access to his presence. Here the sea functions as a traditional link with the past, but we shall see later that its meaning is developed more fully by John to convey further Christian nuances when we consider its appearance in Rev. 15:2 and its involvement in the approach of the saints to God.

C. The Heavenly Attendants.

Within this first section of the inaugural throne-vision, there is mention of two separate groups of heavenly attendants which are portrayed as animated beings. There are the twenty-four elders [εἴκοσι τέσσαρες πρεσβύτεροι] (Rev. 4:4) and the four living creatures [τέσσαρα ζῶα] (Rev. 4:6). In the passage the twenty four elders are actually referred to first, but for the continuity of our study, we will start by discussing the four living creatures and then consider the twenty-four elders.

⁷⁴ The source of its construction material involves an intriguing detail. In Exod. 38:8 it is recorded that it was fabricated from the mirrors of the women who served at the tent's entrance.

⁷⁵ Vriezen (1958) viewed holiness as a fundamental idea of the Old Testament faith, while Hänel (1931) considered holiness as the controlling factor in the doctrine of God in the Old Testament.

⁷⁶ This was also true of their contents, see Exod. 29:37; 30:26-29; 40:10; 1Kgs 8:4; 2Chron. 35:3.

⁷⁷ See Deut. 26:15; 2Chron. 30:27; Pss 11:4; 68:5; 102:19; Isa. 63:15; Jer. 25:30; Jonah 2:4,7; Mic. 1:2; Hab. 2:20; Zech. 2:13.

⁷⁸ Cf. the fate of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-3); Korah and his band of Levites (Num. 16:30); and Uzzah (2Sam. 6:6-7).

⁷⁹ These verses also suggest that this washing is a perpetual priestly ordinance which will have bearing on the reference to the sea of glass in Rev. 15:2.

⁸⁰ Preston (1955) pg. 73.

⁸¹ Kiddle (1940) pg. 300.

⁸² Mounce (1977) pg. 136.

1. The Four Living Creatures.

As we shall see below, John creates, for his own purposes, a discretionary integration of the features of the seraphim [שרפים] in Isaiah 6:2, the cherubim [כרובים]⁸³ and the ophannim (wheels) [אופנים] in Ezekiel 1:5-21 to produce his idiosyncratic entities.⁸⁴ However, initially we shall look at the background of these throne-room attendants.

a. Old Testament Background.

i) General.

As an introduction to the living creatures we must firstly consider their Old Testament background which was influenced by their contemporary ancient near-eastern position.⁸⁵ In the Hebrew Bible the references to these beings (or associated beings), are principally concerned with the cherubim. Their earthly archetypes served various functions. They could be decorative, as embroidery on the curtains of the tabernacle and temple (Exod. 26:1, 31; 36:8, 35; 2Chron. 3:14),⁸⁶ and as sculptures (1Kgs. 6:23-28; 8:6-7 [2Chron. 3:10-13]) and as carvings (1Kgs. 6:29, 32, 35; Ezek. 41:18-20). They constituted either a fixed throne (1Sam. 4:4; 2Sam. 6:2; 2Kgs. 19:15; Pss. 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16)⁸⁷ where they provided a meeting place above the ark of the covenant where God could communicate with Moses (Exod. 25:18-22; 37:7-9; Num. 7:89) or the mobile throne for God to traverse the heavens (2Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10).⁸⁸ Finally, they also functioned as guardians (Gen. 3:24; cf. Ezek. 28:14, 16).

ii) Isaiah's Vision.⁸⁹

In his vision Isaiah gives us some details about his heavenly attendants. The seraphim [שרפים] are creatures described as having six wings: two are used to cover their faces, two to cover their feet, and two to hover above the Lord. In Num. 21:8 the singular *saraph* [שרף] is used substitutionally for a serpent. Also in Isaiah 14:29 and 30:6 *saraph* is used in connection with snakes, and this has led some to think of serpent guardians of the holy presence.⁹⁰ Whatever the background of the term seraphim, their role was to praise YHWH and to aid in the purification of Isaiah for his task.

⁸³ In Ezek. 1 they are referred to as 'living creatures' [חיות], but are identified as cherubim [כרובים] in Ezek. 10:15

⁸⁴ In later literature, there was often, of course, the fusing of the material found in Ezekiel with that of Daniel. This is also found in early literature. In 4QEn^c 1 vii - En. 14:18-20, there are references to 'like crystal-glass and its wheels,' 'cherubim,' 'streams of fire' and the 'Great Majesty sat upon this throne and His raiment was brighter than the sun.' However, Daniel as we have already seen, plays little part, if any, in John's inaugural vision.

⁸⁵ For the general ANE background of the cherub motif, see Vincent (1926). In the first part of this article P.

Dhorme etymologically disposes of various flawed proposals. In the second part, under the heading 'Le Concept Plastique,' Vincent investigates the background and development of the biblical cherubim motif. For a discussion on the biblical symbolic significance and the Mesopotamian background of cherubim, see Harran (1959) pp. 30-38, 89-94. More recently, see Charlesworth (1991) [pp. 103-109] for a relevant discussion on pre-sixth-century seals.

⁸⁶ Their function here was probably to depict the temple as a kind of Paradise.

⁸⁷ For a discussion on the 'cherubim throne,' its background and its relationship to the phrase ידוה צבאות, see Mettinger (1982) pp. 113-119.

⁸⁸ Fishbane (1992) [pg. 67] proposes that the straightforward reading of Pss. 89:15; 97:2-3; 85:11 'strongly suggests that the angels who carried [God's] throne and praised the divine King were in fact hypostases of moral qualities' - righteousness, justice, mercy, and truth.

⁸⁹ See further, 'Isaiah's vision' in the Appendix.

⁹⁰ See Num. 21:6 & Deut. 8:15. PraJac. 1:8 refer to God sitting on 'the serpent gods' which is related to 'the resting place of the cherubim.'

iii) Ezekiel's Visions [Ezek. 1 & 10].⁹¹

Ezekiel's initial vision furnishes us with a description of four bizarre 'living creatures' [חיות]. In Ezekiel 10 these 'living creatures'⁹² are identified as cherubim [כרובים]. The anatomy of these 'living creatures' (as with the 'wheels') is quite baffling. Each creature has four wings and four faces at ninety degrees (of a human being, a lion, an ox and an eagle). Ezekiel's description of his living creatures has spawned generations of offspring.⁹³ There are various permutations when the type, order and number of the faces/heads of these creatures are considered. They can be classified into two main genera as follows (however see footnotes for different variations):

(a) Four creatures each with four faces:⁹⁴

Ezekiel 1	human face	lion face (R)	ox face (L)	eagle face
Ezekiel 1 [LXX]	human face	lion face (R)	calf face ⁹⁵	eagle face
Ezekiel 10 ⁹⁶	cherub face ⁹⁷	human face	lion face	eagle face
[b. Hag. 13b song ⁹⁸	lion	ox	eagle	man]
Pseudo-Ezekiel ⁹⁹	lion face	eagle face	calf face ¹⁰⁰	human face
Apocalypse of Abraham ¹⁰¹	lion face	human face	ox face	eagle face
Hek Zut [§369] ¹⁰²	human face	lion face	bull face	eagle face

(b) Four creatures each with one form [or face]:

Revelation	lion	ox	human face	flying eagle
OnOrgWld 104 ¹⁰³	lion forms	bull forms	human forms	eagle forms
Hek Rab §273	man form	ox form	lion form	eagle form
[Story of Daniel ¹⁰⁴	ox	eagle	lion	man]

b. Combined Influence of Isaiah's and Ezekiel's Heavenly Attendants.

The heavenly creatures found in these two visions influenced their prolific progeny in two main directions (both of which can often be present in a single work):

i) Firstly, they can continue to appear listed together as the separate entities, in combinations of seraphim, cherubim, ophanim, or living creatures¹⁰⁵ (1En. 61:10; 1En. 71:6-7; 2En. 21-22:

⁹¹ See further, 'Ezekiel's vision' in the Appendix.

⁹² These 'living creatures' are given more anthropomorphic features than the 'seraphim' of Isaiah 6. So we read of 'human form', 'faces', 'legs', 'feet', 'human hands', 'heads', and 'stood erect'.

⁹³ It is most probable that the obscure descriptions in Ezekiel 1 & 10 prompted the various later interpretations.

⁹⁴ LadJac 2:8 refers to 'four-faced cherubim.' Merk. Rab. §655 refers to 'four-faced creatures.' In 3En. 21:2 the vast creatures have four faces each looking like a sunrise. However each of them is described as having 'faces within faces.' Also, Hyp Arch 95.27 refers to a 'huge four-faced chariot of cherubim.'

⁹⁵ σόμχος is used to translate שׁוֹר which is understood as a full-grown ox or bullock.

⁹⁶ In the LXX the description of the faces is missing, while the Targum follows the Hebrew Bible.

⁹⁷ See b. Hag. 13b for a rabbinical discussion and attempted harmonisation of this substitution relative to Ezek. 1.

⁹⁸ b. Hag. 13b quotes both Ezekiel 1 and 10 verbatim. However the order noted above in the table is that given in the context of the rabbi's discussion of the 'Song of the exulted ones'.

⁹⁹ See Brooke (1992) [pp. 333-336] for a discussion on this sequence compared with Ezek. 1:10; 10:14 and Rev. 4:7. See also Dimant (1989) pp. 339-340.

¹⁰⁰ עגל is used here instead of שׁוֹר.

¹⁰¹ The subsequent clause in the vision account reveals that, in fact, each creature had four heads each with these four faces. Thus the four living creatures had sixteen faces each, so by deduction the initial reference to 'four faces' actually anticipated 'four heads'.

¹⁰² In this work, there are four creatures, each with four faces, on each of the four corners. This gives a total of 64 faces and 265 wings. This configuration is also seen in Targum of Ezek. 1:6.

¹⁰³ Interestingly, this Gnostic tractate is the only work to follow the same sequence of faces/forms as Revelation. However Fallon (1978) [pp. 102-103] sees no link here.

¹⁰⁴ Buchanan (1978) pg. 478. This is a description of the four legs of the throne of Solomon (1Kgs 10:18-20; 2Chron. 9:17-19), but even although the description of his throne is the most embellished in the Hebrew Bible there is no mention of its legs. However, in later hekhalot material, HekRab. §187 mentions the feet of the throne (cf. b. Hag. 13a) and Hek Zut. §368 gives the names of the four feet and their associated hayyot.

¹⁰⁵ Targum Ezek. 1: 8 mention both seraphim and cherubim active in the throne-room.

b. Hag. 12b; Heb. Vis. II 3-4; *Hek. Rab.* §187; *Hek. Zut* §411; §426; Fal. Pray. 5). A list of this kind can be expanded to incorporate them within much larger groups of other heavenly beings represented by various orders of angels.¹⁰⁶ We find this particularly in some of the later *hekhalot* literature, and especially in 3 Enoch which approaches the task of systematising its angelology with zealous abandon.¹⁰⁷ This also happened in later Christian literature, however to a lesser extent (*AposCon.* 8.12.27; GBart. Fol. 3a; 6a; 7b; 10a; 15b; TAdam 4).

ii) Secondly they can merge to feature in a variety of hybrid guises. In fact, this process appears to have started even in Ezekiel itself when in chapter 10 it becomes difficult to separate the 'wheels',¹⁰⁸ from the 'living creatures'.¹⁰⁹ In some works the cherubim are given voices (TJob 50:2; TIsaac 7:1; QuEzra [A] 29-30; ApMary [6] 5th bk), and six wings (QEzra [A] 29-30; *AposCon* 7.35.3),¹¹⁰ while the seraphim can have many eyes (LadJac. 2:8; 2En.[J] 21:1), and can form the chariot (TIsaac 6:26; ApMary [6] 2nd bk). In ApAbr 18 there is a rather similar combination to that of Revelation - the 'living creatures' combine the descriptive features of the cherubim and seraphim (though the ophannim remain separate), and they incorporate the functions of the seraphim, singing songs of praise as well as supporting the throne. Thus it is to this second grouping, with its tendency to conflate the heavenly attendants, that John's creatures clearly belong.

c. John's Use of Isaiah and Ezekiel.

It would be helpful at this stage to summarise the characteristics of each of these heavenly beings of Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1, in order to compare them with John's Living Creatures.¹¹¹

Being	No.	Description	Function
<i>Seraphim</i>	2?	Each has 6 wings ¹¹² One takes part in the commissioning and speaks to Isaiah	Stand in attendance ¹¹³ Sing praises antiphonally
<i>Cherubim</i>	4	They have a human form Each has 4 faces: human, lion (R), ox (L), eagle Each has 4 wings Each has (2?) straight legs and soles like a calf's Each has (4 or 8?) human hands They are intrinsically linked by their wings They dart like a flash of lightning In motion their wings sound like the thunder of the Almighty Whilst stationary this noise ceases Each, with its spirit, is intrinsically linked to the ophannim	Throne bearers. Mobility providers Supporters of the altar ¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁶ See Olyon (1993) for a study of this tendency within Jewish literature to multiply orders of angels.

¹⁰⁷ See Alexander *OTPI* (1983) pp. 242-244.

¹⁰⁸ In Ezek. 10:12 the author appears to attribute a body, hands, and wings to the 'wheels' rather than to the cherubim. Halperin (1976) [pg. 137] suggests that this verse is an early (post-Ezekiel) witness of the conversion of the wheel into what would develop later into a class of angels ('*ofannim*').

¹⁰⁹ In *Second Ezekiel* (or *Pseudo-Ezekiel*) 4Q385 frag. 4 line 7 there appears to be borrowing from Isa. 6:2. See, Dimant (1989) pp. 338, 346.

¹¹⁰ In GedMos 25, the Holy Creatures have six wings.

¹¹¹ In the table below the characteristics which appear in John's heavenly beings are highlighted in bold print.

¹¹² This appears to have engendered a later tradition where *angels* are described as possessing six wings. In ApEl 5:2 'sixty-four thousand angels each of whom has six wings'; in 2En. 16:7 there are 'six wings to each angel'; and 2En. 19:6 refers to 'six winged beings'. However it should be noted that in GedMos 25 *angels* standing before God have six wings, but they are identified by Metatron as being 'the holy Creatures.' So, perhaps at a later stage there was greater fluidity between angels, cherubim, seraphim, living creatures etc..

¹¹³ Isaiah 6:2 states that the seraphim 'stood above him' [עמדו במעל ל]. This is also the position in which Rabbi Akiba sees them in the later *Ma'aseh Merk.* §595. However in Isa. 6:2 [LXX] they 'stood round about him' [εἰσστήκεισαν κύκλῳ αὐτοῦ]. The LXX translator probably thought it was inappropriate that anything should be 'above' God. This Septuagint rendering is closer to the position of the living creatures found in Rev. 4. So also 2En. 21:1; QEzra [A] 29-30.

¹¹⁴ It is perhaps not the altar as such, but it is a receptacle of burning coals of fire.

Ophannim 4	Appearance like the gleaming of beryl Each has the same form and is wheel-like Each has tall and awesome rims which were 'full of eyes all round' ¹¹⁵	It would appear to be the same as those of the cherubim
John's Living Creatures ¹¹⁷	4 Each has an individual head (or face): of a lion, ox, human face, and flying eagle ¹¹⁶ Each has six wings Full of eyes 'in front and behind', 'all around and inside'	Unceasingly lead God's praise Later, individually involved in a judgment by summoning the horsemen

Finally in this section it is helpful to tabulate all the characteristics of John's living creatures so as to clarify their background and probable exegetical source:

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Probable Source</u>
Four in number	Cherubim Ezek. 1:5 (also the number of ophannin [Ezek. 1:15])
Full of eyes: in front and behind	Ophannin Ezek. 1:18
Lion-ox-human-eagle features	Cherubim Ezek. 1:10
Each had six wings	Seraphim Isa. 6:2
Sing praises	Seraphim Isa. 6:3a ¹¹⁸
Their Song	Seraphim Isa. 6:3b
Sing without ceasing	?Watchers Dan. 4:13,17,23

This last association of the characteristic of 'ceaseless singing' with the watchers of Dan. 4 needs further explanation. This is the only feature which does not have an obvious exegetical source. However in his commentary, M. Black¹¹⁹ links the watchers of 1 Enoch 1:5 with the those in Daniel 4 [Heb./Aram. עִירִים]. Then later on in 1 Enoch 39:12-13 'those who do not sleep' are mentioned in the context of praising God.

Thus the living creatures of John could be seen to reflect the *descriptions* of the cherubim and ophannim, whilst incorporating the *description and function* of the seraphim, and the *function* of the watchers.

d. The Function of the Living Creatures.

i) Redundant Features.

It is worthwhile looking quickly at the functions of the living creatures which John considers redundant. This serves to highlight even more their main activity which is to worship, and to lead the worship in heaven of the One seated on the throne.¹²⁰ In Ezekiel's visions they formed a structure which appeared to have supported the throne above it.¹²¹ However in Revelation,

¹¹⁵ Gruenwald (1980) [pg. 56] assigns the description 'full of eyes' to the four creatures, however it is the 'Wheels' that have this attribute.

¹¹⁶ Some commentators have suggested links here with the four constellations of the zodiac. However this is not the context for such a discussion because clearly John's primary source is Ezekiel. Thus if any discussion is warranted it is in relation to its use in Ezekiel.

¹¹⁷ Some commentators refer to John's 'living creatures' as 'cherubim' however they are not really such. They are rather an amalgamation of Ezekiel's living creatures (which are later on, in Ezek. 10, identified as cherubim), and the 'Wheels,' and also Isaiah's seraphim. So I think it is more prudent to distinguish between the various groups which appear at various later stages in their development as cherubim, seraphim, ophannim, and Living Creatures, among other designations.

¹¹⁸ It is possible in other throne-room scenes that this feature could be based on Ezek. 1:24 which refers to the sound of the creatures' wings. There was also the general idea that all heavenly beings in God's presence praise him (cf. 1En. 61:10-11). However in the case of John's creatures with the context of them singing the Triagon, the most obvious source is that of Isaiah's seraphim.

¹¹⁹ Black (1985) pg. 106.

¹²⁰ After this inaugural vision they will play a role in the unleashing of the 'four horsemen of the Apocalypse.' However their role in this vision is to worship along with the twenty-four elders in chapter 4. Then in chapter 5 the twenty four elders introduce a new song which eventually stimulates worship by the whole creation, and living creatures provide the benediction.

¹²¹ Cf. TAdam 4:8 the cherubim bear the throne. In *Hekhalot Rabbati* the angels are frequently referred to as 'bearers of the throne', see Schäfer (1992) pg. 21. Also however in *Hek. Rab.* §187 and in *Hek. Zut.* §368-371 it is the *hayyot* that perform this task.

they are no longer the throne-bearers, nor do they form an integral part of the structure of the throne as a section of its carriage or substructure. Some commentators, because of the obscurity of the phrase which describes their position around the throne

[ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου], have suggested that they actually are a component of the throne.¹²² However the phrase could reasonably express the notion of the living creatures flanking the throne at the middle of each of the four sides. Additionally, the movement which they display within the throne-room does not favour them as being part of the throne itself. Nevertheless it is noteworthy that the living creatures/cherubim usually have some very close connection with the throne and Revelation does retain this. Some scholars¹²³ have also suggested that the living creatures have retained their duty as guardians of the throne.¹²⁴ However, this is also probably difficult to sustain, as there is not an explicit reference to this function.¹²⁵

ii) Their Raison d'être.

The main function of the living creatures, as we have already noted has its roots in Isaiah's seraphim. It is to lead the heavenly worship of the One seated on the throne. However John does not continue the idea of antiphonal singing, but he does introduce the concept of unceasing worship into their activity. The living creatures are described as participating in continuous worship (Rev. 4:8) [ἀνάπαυσιν οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς λέγοντες] (lit. 'they have not respite, day and night, saying').¹²⁶ This notion of ceaseless worship in heaven is not found in the earlier Jewish material.¹²⁷ However, as we noted above it does appear in 1En. 39:12-13 and it is also found in other approximately contemporary and later works. Thus the seraphim can sing unceasingly (LadJac 2:15; *OnOrgWld* 150.16-19) along with the cherubim (*AposCon* 7.35.3) and in unison with the heavenly multitude (*AposCon* 8.12.27). There are also references to continuous worship in TLevi 3:8; 2En.[J] 8:8; 17:1; 21:1; 22:3 and HistRech 16:8. In later Jewish writings, the living creatures were often referred to as 'holy (living) creatures' [*hayyot ha-qodesh*].¹²⁸ This includes: rabbinic writings (*b. Hag.* 12b); *hekhalot* literature (*Ma'aseh Merk.* §553; *Hek. Rab.* §187); and other later Jewish literature (HebVis. II 5, 7; Sword of Moses (B); GedMos. 25).¹²⁹ This is not a designation found in Ezekiel nor in Revelation, however it probably came about because of the association of the Ezekiel's cherubim with Isaiah's seraphim and their praise which commences with the Trishagion, the 'Thrice Holy.' It is on this song recorded in Isaiah 6:3 that we will now focus our attention.

¹²² See Brewer (1952) pp. 227-231; Hall (1990) pp. 609-613; Halperin (1988) [pp. 91-2] in the discussion of his hymnic tradition; See Baumgarten (1988) in connection with the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* [4Q405 19 ABCD] and 1 Enoch 14:18.

¹²³ So, among others, Farrer (1964) pg. 91; Mounce (1977) pg. 138; Beale (1988) pg. 322; Roloff (1993) pg. 71.

¹²⁴ See QuEzra [A] 29-30; 1En. 71:7; 2En. [A] 1a:6; 21:1 refer to 'the army of the cherubim'. Cf. Ezek. 28:14; Gen. 3:24; ApMary [6] 5th bk. [ASL] refers to 'guardian angels who bore the chariots from beneath.'

¹²⁵ Perhaps the description 'full of eyes in front and behind' (Rev. 4:6) could suggest vigilance and so the sense of guarding. However it is certainly not explicit.

¹²⁶ Cf. ApAbr. 18:8 the living creatures cease singing. In *b.Hag.* 13b 'At times they are silent, at times they speak.' In Rev. 14:11, there is the parody of those who worship the beast or receive his mark - they have no rest day or night. For discussion of silence in heaven for half an hour (Rev. 8:1) and its relation to ceaseless worship, see Bauckham (1993) pp. 70-83.

¹²⁷ See Aune (1997) pg. 302.

¹²⁸ Although I have not done a comprehensive study, it appears that it is less of a concern in Christian literature.

¹²⁹ In the Targum to Isaiah 6:2, the seraphim are described as 'holy attendants.'

e. The Song of the Seraphim in Isaiah 6:3.

In Isaiah's vision (Isa. 6:3) we have the first record of the worship by the heavenly attendants, as "one called another" [קרא זה אל-זה], a phrase which typifies Hebrew antiphonal worship.¹³⁰ They were transmitting this message to and fro between them as they replied to each other, 'Holy, holy, holy'¹³¹ is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.' This is an important strophe as it is the only hymnic material within the throne visions of the Old Testament. It is also only here within the Old Testament that this threefold repetition of 'holy'¹³² is found. O. Kaiser¹³³ suggests that the refrain in Psalm 99:3,5,9 seems to be in concentrated form here. The word 'holy' [קדוש] was a fundamental concept within Hebrew religion. It expresses the notion of separation, distinctness, uniqueness, beyond any comparison with any other thing or being (especially when used adjectivally with the Deity).¹³⁴ The appropriate reaction to 'holiness' is awe and wonder, and this emphasises the concept of the transcendence of YHWH.¹³⁵

i) The Influence of the Song on Later Literature.

This "Seraphs' Song" had a very impressive influence on later literature. It has been used and adapted in various forms in a whole range of Jewish and Christian literature. The thrice-holy accolade has been included simply by itself,¹³⁶ or repeated frequently over large sections of text in the praise of God.¹³⁷ Other texts reproduce this song of the seraphim virtually verbatim,¹³⁸ or with slight variations (e.g. heaven is included as well as earth).¹³⁹ However what is of more interest to us here are those which included more significant adaptations. Some passages incorporate it to praise God and then proceed to make other different points. In 4Bar. 9:2-6, Jeremiah implores God, in the context of an incense offering, for mercy, to hear the voice of the seraphim, and that Michael be the object of his attention until he and the righteous reach God's presence. A cypress cries out at the command of God in TAb. [A] 3:3 to summon Abraham to join (though death) those who love God.¹⁴⁰ In GBart. Fol.10a it is extended and the hosts of heaven sing it in praise of Jesus Christ. Other passages expand this song by adding more names

¹³⁰ Cf. Neh. 12:31ff; Pss. 24; 91; 115; 118; 121; 136. It has been suggested from the phrase 'one called to another' that there were apparently two of them [Joines (1967) pg. 410].

¹³¹ Walker (1959), on the evidence of two variant readings suggests that the *Trishagion* was originally a *Disagion* signifying 'Holy, exceeding holy.' However Leiser (1959-60) concludes that his case is inconclusive and that the threefold repetition was traditional and thus original in Isaiah 6:3.

¹³² The adjective 'holy' is used to qualify God's 'name' in the Old Testament more often than all the other qualifiers together. 'The Holy One of Israel' is a very frequent phrase within Isaiah to describe YHWH.

¹³³ Kaiser (1983) pg. 126.

¹³⁴ Objects, things and people that are associated with YHWH can be described as 'holy', but in a derived and secondary way. So, Exod. 3:5 (ground); Exod. 16:23 (Sabbath); Exod. 22:31 (men); Exod. 28:2 (garments); Exod. 30:25 (anointing oil); Obad. 16 (mountain); and Jonah 2:4 (temple).

¹³⁵ Stacey (1993) [pg. xxviii] suggests that the quality of holiness cannot be applied to Baal, not because of ethical differences between the two religions (although these did exist), but because Baal was involved with his worshippers in the operation of the created order, whereas YHWH was above, over and beyond it.

¹³⁶ So, e.g. TAdam 1:6; 4:8; Cod. Bruce Untitled 7; Hyp. Arch. 97.19-20; 3En. 48B:2; ApMary[6] 5th bk. Exod. R 15:6 (pg. 168) reads 'The angels proclaim daily, 'Holy, holy, holy,' (Isa. VI, 2), and Israel say: 'The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' In the footnote to this section, there is the comment that 'the mentioning of three Patriarchs is thus understood to correspond to the Trisagion of angels.' However it is also interesting to observe that this heavenly song, precipitates an earthly response.

¹³⁷ So for instance, Melch. 16.16-18.8. Here within a liturgical prayer it follows the pattern, 'Holy are you' (3X) followed by the name of the divine being addressed. Also in Hek. Rab. §94-106 there is a long sequence of hymns, the majority of which finish with the trisagion.

¹³⁸ 1Clem. 34.6; 3En. 22B:7; Sword of Moses (A); Te' Ezaza Sanbat [19]; Cf. TAb. [A] 20:12.

¹³⁹ 2En. [J] 21:1; QuEzra [A] 1:29; TIsaac 6:5,24; ApostCon. 7.35.3; 8.12.27; 3En. 1:12; cf. 1En. 39:12 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of spirits; he fills the earth with spirits.' 3En. 35-40 contains a whole section of discussion on the subject of the Qedussah.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Fal Pray 8-13 which also contain a large number of various modifications on this theme.

of God and also a more descriptive list of his attributes and deeds (LadJac. 2:15; ApocGorg. [83]; Te' Ezaza Sanbat [13, 25]). Finally, in this section, the Targum to Isaiah 6:3 supplies a very relevant amplification which reads, 'Holy in the *heavens* of the height, his *sanctuary*, holy upon the *earth*, the work of his might, holy in *eternity* is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is filled with his *brilliance* of his glory.' These words virtually summarise the positive aspects of the message of John's vision sequence: God, in his holiness, is transcendent in his heavenly temple; potentially creation can share this holiness by the powerful work of the Lamb, through his death and resurrection; then as the focus moves out into eternity, the glorious heavenly Jerusalem descends from heaven and God's glory is all-pervasive as he makes his dwelling among human beings.

ii) The Use of the Song in Revelation 4:8.

The words of the song which the living creatures sing in Rev. 4:8 are as follows: 'Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come.' John starts the sequence of his hymnic material with this partial citation of Isaiah 6:2. This is the closest he comes to quoting a whole sentence from the Old Testament. Thus, even although his various paeans which appear throughout the book are his own compositions, he has rooted them within this Jewish traditional background. There are two main variations between this hymn and the "Seraphs' song." Firstly, he replaces the 'LORD of Hosts' [Heb.: יהוה צבאות] [LXX: κύριος σαβαώθ] with 'the Lord God the Almighty' [κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ]. As mentioned earlier, this is one of John's favourite designations for God, so this is an obvious replacement for him to make.¹⁴¹ The concept of 'almighty' [παντοκράτωρ] is not so much a detached, remote sense of power but rather a 'hands-on' sense of control over everything [πάς: all, κρατέω: to hold, or to have strength].¹⁴² This concept will be more fully expounded in the elders' song in Rev.4:11.

The second substitution that John makes is that it includes another title for God, 'who was and is and is to come' instead of concluding the refrain with 'the whole earth is full of his glory.' Because of John's schema of his portrayal of the world events, he cannot yet make this statement. At this stage in his vision, the condition on earth is virtually the antithesis of this description. The continuation of the vision into chapter 5 has yet to come. This chapter will reveal the means by which God's glory will fill the earth. It is, of course, the sight of the slaughtered Lamb, whose resurrection has made this redemption a possibility. There is a series of judgments, and the last great assizes which must still take place, before the final fruition of this hope is realised. However, within this title which John has substituted, the last phrase, 'and is to come' gives a clear hint that, because God is in charge of the future, his glory will one day suffuse, not only heaven, but also all creation.

2. The Twenty-four Elders.

As we noted earlier, the twenty-four elders were the next to be mentioned immediately after the throne and its Occupant. This was the case even although they are on the periphery encompassing the rest of the contents of the throne-room which are mentioned in chapter 4. This would indicate their importance,¹⁴³ as they are ranked before the obviously traditional motifs of the living creatures, the associated audible and visual manifestations of a theophany, the seven flaming torches, the sea of glass, and the altar. They emerge in Revelation chapter 4

¹⁴¹ Beale (1999) [pg. 332] notes its recurrent use in the LXX, citing Amos 3:13; 4:13; 5:14-16; 9:5-6, 15; Hos. 12:6[5]; Neh. 3:5; Zech. 10:3; Mal. 2:16. In these passages κύριος...παντοκράτωρ translates YHWH Sabaoth. Thus although Isa. 6:2 [LXX] does not use it, this phrase is a standard equivalent in Greek for YHWH Sabaoth.

¹⁴² The only other place that the term 'almighty' is found outside Revelation (9x) in the New Testament is in 2Cor. 6:18. The name, the Lord Almighty comes at the end of an interesting section where some commentators see Qumran affinities. However for our interest, there are references to Christians being 'the temple of the living God,' God, living and walking among his people and being their father, as they are his sons and daughters.

¹⁴³ In the light of Revelation's usual literary integrity, Charles (1920) [pp. 104-5] make the highly unlikely suggestion that their prominent position was due to a later faulty redaction by its author.

and are frequently referred to throughout the book, but they disappear from view in the final vision (Rev. 21-22). This corresponds to their subsequent fate in the throne-room scenes of most of the later writings. As far as I am aware, they only materialise again on the heavenly horizon in the Apocalypse of Paul,¹⁴⁴ and the Gospel of Bartholomew (= The Book of the Resurrection).¹⁴⁵

a. Background.

The fact that there is very little in Jewish traditional material,¹⁴⁶ and for that matter in Christian literature, to shed light on their background and identity, has led to a number of interesting speculations about this esoteric group. However, other than a few relevant comments, it is not my intention to spend too much space trying to unravel the various theories.¹⁴⁷ Rather, more space will be taken to discuss their description and function as these are portrayed in the different scenes in which they appear. This would seem to be a more profitable pursuit. Some of the proposals which have been forwarded to identify the elders¹⁴⁸ are that they are a heavenly council of angels¹⁴⁹ or perhaps angelic kings,¹⁵⁰ or a group of Old Testament worthies¹⁵¹ (which may also include an equal number of New Testament saints or apostles¹⁵²). Other scholars, with reference to their number, have suggested that the elders are the twenty-four star gods of the Babylonian pantheon.¹⁵³ They note that in the Old Testament the heavenly council is sometimes referred to as 'the host of heaven', and so can be identified with the stars (cf. Job 38:7). However, most commentators, when considering the number of the elders, allude to the probable influence of 1 Chronicles 24-25¹⁵⁴ which records the twenty-four¹⁵⁵ divisions of priests and singers who must be present in the Temple. This would appear to be a plausible suggestion in the light of the cultic features that are attributed to the elders and also the temple imagery which is prevalent throughout Revelation as we have seen.

¹⁴⁴ ApPaul 14 and 44. These passages are clearly dependent on Revelation. There is an interesting passage in the Falasha prayers [Leslau (1951) pg. 117] where there is a description of the praise to God in heaven by various groups which includes 'twenty-four priests of heaven who burn incense around the throne.' Later on, in Rev. 5:8, the twenty-four elders are described as having 'golden bowls full of incense.'

¹⁴⁵ GBart. Fol. 3a; 10a; 16a.

¹⁴⁶ Bousset (1906) [pg. 247] surmises that John was dependent on a traditional motif which we don't now understand.

¹⁴⁷ For the most recent discussions see Beale (1999) [pp. 322-326] and Aune (1997) [pp. 287-292]. For an extensive coverage of the subject see Feuillet (1958) [pp. 5-32] and also Feuillet (1964) [pp. 183-214]. For other surveys, see *TDNT* VI [pg. 668ff.]; and Brüttsch (1970) [pp. 220-224].

¹⁴⁸ It should be noted that the primal canonical throne-vision (Exodus 24:9-11) makes reference to elders before God's throne. This passage in the Hebrew Bible does not refer to an actual throne. However, the Targum of Onkelos replaces reference to God's feet with the phrase 'the throne of His Glory,' and the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan also includes a reference to God's throne. Isaiah 24:23 refers to God in the presence of elders, see Feuillet (1958) [pp. 13-14]; Fekkes (1994) [pp. 141-142] for reasons for a possible link. Cf. 2En. 4:1.

¹⁴⁹ So Preston (1955) pg. 72. With this suggestion there are various discussions as to whether angels can sit, or whether angels could be referred to as elders.

¹⁵⁰ Beckwith (1919) pg. 498.

¹⁵¹ Sweet (1979) pg. 118. There would be a correlation here with the ancients [οἱ πρεσβύτεροι] in Heb. 11:2 who were commended for their faith.

¹⁵² Swete (1906) pg. 69. Also, Ratton (1912) [pg. 189] suggests that, 'The four and twenty "ancients" ... are the twelve Patriarchs of the Old Law and the twelve Apostles of the New, as we gather from Rev. xviii.20 and xix.4.' Charles (1920) I [pg. 129-130] notes those of a similar persuasion. Niles, (1962) [pg. 30] proposes that "twenty-four" symbolises 'the continuous Church of God through Old Testament and New Testament times.' Cf. Mat. 19:28 [Lk. 22:30]. 1En. 60.2 refers to God being surrounded by the angels and *the righteous ones*.

¹⁵³ Bousset (1909) pp. 290-1; Case (1919) pg. 251; Kiddle (1940) pg. 84; Yarbrow Collins (1984) pg. 1280; (1996) pp. 128-129.

¹⁵⁴ See Jeremias (1969) [pp. 198-213] for a discussion of the Temple clergy, especially the 'ordinary' priests and the Levites, at the time of Jesus.

¹⁵⁵ Gruenwald (1980) [pg. 714] notes the saying of R. Yohanan (P. T. *Sanhedrin* 10, 29c) 'the people of Israel did not go into exile before they had become twenty-four sects of heretics'. The Gospel of Thomas Logion 52 refers to twenty-four prophets who spoke in Israel.

It is our view that the elders are heavenly royal priests who are the representation and personification of God's people. In the light of this proposition we will consider their recorded description and function.

b. Their Description and Function.

i) Preview.

The elders are associated with twenty-four thrones (Rev. 4:4; 11:16). They wear white robes and golden crowns (Rev. 4:4). They hold harps (Rev. 5:8) and golden bowls full of incense (Rev. 5:8). They follow the lead of the four living creatures in worship by prostrating themselves before the One seated on the throne (Rev. 4:10; 5:8,13; 11:16; 19:4), and by casting down their crowns before the throne (Rev. 4:10). Twice, an unspecified member of their group acts as an interpreter and communicator to John - in Rev. 5:5, he is introduced to the one who is uniquely able to open the scroll and a few chapters later (Rev. 7:13-17) an elder reveals the identity of the innumerable multitude who have been victorious and purified. Communally, the elders take part in the heavenly praise, as part of all creation united in song (Rev. 5:13) and together with the four living creatures for a benediction (Rev. 19:4). They also sing exclusively as an individual group. God is firstly praised as the sole Creator (Rev. 4:10-11). Secondly the Lamb is introduced, in a new song, as the Redeemer of the saints gathered from every tribe, language, people and nation, to be transformed into a kingdom and priests with the purpose of serving God and reigning on earth (Rev. 5:9-10). Thirdly, they intimate that the Almighty has commenced his universal reign: judging the unrighteous, while rewarding the faithful (Rev. 11:17-18). Thus, D. Guthrie is correct when he discerns that, 'what is more important than their identity is their function within this heavenly worship service'¹⁵⁶ because after their introduction in Rev. 4:4, in the remaining eleven references, the elders' overwhelming function is that of worship.¹⁵⁷ We will now consider the actions and articles associated with the elders a little more closely.

ii) White Robes.

The white robes express the notion of purity and holiness. The colour 'white' and more especially, the idea of being attired in white, had a long heritage in the Jewish past. It was associated with those attributes befitting for those found in the presence of God.¹⁵⁸ The High Priest wore linen garments (Lev. 6:10; cf. Ezek. 9:2ff; Dan. 10:5ff) which were described as holy (Lev. 16:4,32). In later rabbinic thought this apparel is seen as 'garments of white.'¹⁵⁹

iii) Harps.¹⁶⁰

The recurring references in the book of Psalms to musical instruments¹⁶¹ clearly imply that they were an intrinsic component of Israel's worship. The traditional instrument associated with the singing of Psalms was the harp.¹⁶² Along with cymbals, lyres and trumpets, it was played in Temple services.¹⁶³ With this proliferation of cultic instrumentalists, it is surprising that the throne-visions prior to the Apocalypse would appear to be devoid of musical instruments. There are, of course, the singing seraphim in Isaiah's vision, but there is no mention of accompaniment.

¹⁵⁶ Guthrie (1992) pg. 77.

¹⁵⁷ In the remaining references (Rev. 5:6,11; 7:11; 14:3) they are mentioned only as positional aid for other activities which are taking place.

¹⁵⁸ See Ps. 51:7; Isa. 1:18; Dan. 11:35, and particularly, for white garments, Eccl. 9:8; Dan. 7:9; 2Esd. 2:39,40; 2Macc. 11:8.

¹⁵⁹ *Mishnah Yoma* 3.6.

¹⁶⁰ The harps and also the next topic, the 'golden bowls full of incense,' are actually not mentioned until Rev. 5:8, however for the continuity of our present studies we will consider them in detail here and then make reference to them in passing when we look at chapter 5.

¹⁶¹ Pss. 43:4; 98:5,6; 147:7; 149:3; 150:3-5.

¹⁶² Pss. 33:2-3; 57:8; 71:22; 81:2; 92:3; 108:2; 144:9.

¹⁶³ 1Chron. 25:6; 2Chron. 5:12; 9:11; 20:28; 29:25.

Even in later throne-room scenes although heavenly choirs are commonplace, celestial orchestras are much less common. There are harps and lyres in the seventh heaven, in *Hyp. Arch.* 95.30. In the other closely related Gnostic work *OnOrgWld* 105.33-106.1, this expands to thirty harps, psalteries and trumpets, while in the Jewish mystic text *Hek. Rab.* §161 there is an empyreal ensemble consisting of *hayyot* harpists, cherubim cymbalists, with the ophannim on the tambourines.

iv) Golden Bowls of Incense.

These receptacles¹⁶⁴ with their contents¹⁶⁵ again clearly have priestly derivations.¹⁶⁶ Early throne-scenes do not include this motif, unless the smoke [עשן] in Isaiah 6:4 is an implicit reference to the burning of incense on the altar which is mentioned later in the vision. In the Apocalypse, the incense is identified as being 'the prayers of the saints.' This association does have its roots in the Hebrew Bible as the psalmist (Ps. 141:2) beseeches God to accept his prayer as incense proffered before Him.¹⁶⁷ There is no mention of the twenty-four elders actually offering these prayers. In fact, there is a later reference in Revelation (8:3-4) where an angel is recorded as offering a large quantity of incense along with the prayers of the saints. This is in line with contemporary and later works. The passage in ApPaul 44, with its dependence on Revelation, refers to 'the smoke of a good odour' rising from beside the altar. This takes place in the context of angels in prayer on behalf of mankind. In GLAE 33:4-5 the angels, with golden censers and three bowls, offer incense on a celestial altar as they intercede in prayer for Adam.¹⁶⁸ In 3 Baruch (Slavonic),¹⁶⁹ Michael, the archangel, descends with a very large receptacle to receive the prayers of men to God.¹⁷⁰ However there exist two relevant citations in the later Jewish Falasha literature. In Te' Ezaza Sanbat, [pg 18] the priests of heaven continually bring incense before God's holy throne. More interestingly in Falasha Prayers 5 [pg. 117] their number is given as twenty-four.¹⁷¹

v) Golden Crowns and Thrones.

Not only do the elders have sacerdotal features, they also have royal associations due to the fact that they initially are portrayed as sitting on thrones and wearing golden crowns. So far we have considered the general role of priests and how this may relate to the twenty-four elders. However with John's penchant for merging motifs there may be a link here with the high priesthood. The post-exilic high priesthood in the Hasmoneans incorporated both cultic and royal functions.¹⁷² Thus John may be developing his depiction here to include the high priest who historically was the only human who was allowed into the holy of holies - the very presence of God. So the elders, as human representatives, take on this connotation so as to

¹⁶⁴ Ford (1975) [pg. 87] refers to them as 'shovels of incense.' For a recent discussion on ritual golden implements of the cult, see Hurowitz (1995) pp. 151-164.

¹⁶⁵ See Haran (1960) for an article on the three different ways spices were used in the ritual practices of the Old Testament and the associated parallels within ANE cults: i) a supplement in sacrifice ii) censer incense (the ordinary incense), and iii) altar incense. Also, for a more general ANE background see Nielsen (1986).

¹⁶⁶ Num. 16:5,46; Deut. 33:10; 2Chron. 26:18.

¹⁶⁷ In Sir. 39:14-16 incense is mentioned in the context of verbal praise of God accompanied by harps.

¹⁶⁸ In TLevi 3:5 the angels of the presence of the Lord in the 6th heaven offer to the Lord a pleasant odour, a reasonable and bloodless offering (cf. 1En. 47:1ff). However, this rather rare concept of sacrifice within Jewish throne visions makes no reference to incense. In the *Sabbath Songs* there is a focus on the role of the angels as priests in the heavenly temple. In 11Q17 frgs. 21-22 there is reference to them conducting the heavenly sacrificial service.

¹⁶⁹ 3Bar. [S] 11:4,7,9; 14:2; 15:2. In the Greek version, the contents of the bowl are the virtues and good works of the righteous (3Bar. [G] 11:9; 12:5; 15:2).

¹⁷⁰ In Tob. 12:15 [LXX], Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, presents the prayers of the saints before God. Cf. ApPaul 43, Michael stands in the presence of God every hour and 'does not cease from praying continually for the human race.' Also in HistRech 16:8, angels receive and transmit prayers of the Blessed Ones before the divine and mystic throne.

¹⁷¹ However, one would suspect dependence on Rev. 4 because some Falasha literature is of Christian origin, which has been 'dechristianized' for Falasha use.

¹⁷² See Thompson (1969) pg. 337 nt. 24 for references.

He notes that in *Mishnah Yoma* 1.5 these royal priests are actually called 'elders.' See, also Gray (1925) pg. 179.

exist in such close proximity to God. The conception of heavenly beings being enthroned and crowned is certainly absent from canonical throne-visions.¹⁷³ However in the potentially earlier work, the Apocalypse of Zephaniah [A] there are various points of contact. In the fifth heaven, there are hymn-singing angels called "lords" who are crowned and enthroned, dwelling in the 'temples of salvation'.¹⁷⁴ While in the approximately contemporary Ascension of Isaiah (Asclsa. 9:8-12), the angel-like righteous dead are mentioned in the context of their thrones and crowns. In the Gnostic *Tripartite Tractate* (Tri. Trac. 134.28-30) the psychics rise from their thrones, but are kept from their crowns. In the later *hekhalot* literature, 3 Enoch has a continuous reference to heavenly princes removing their glorious crowns (3En. 8:1-24) and each of the living creatures has two thousand crowns (3En. 21:4). While in *Hekhalot Rabbati* §98 the angels known as the 'bearers of the throne' are crowned.

In the book of Revelation three types of crown appear: a) the organic wreath [στέφανος] b) diadem [διάδημα], and the one relevant to the elders: c) the golden wreath [στέφανος χρυσοῦς] (4:4, 10).¹⁷⁵ Stevenson affirms that the term στέφανος can be used to denote the original crown of the Jewish high priest.¹⁷⁶ Therefore it is quite plausible to propose a link between the elders' crowns and that of the hieratic headgear worn by the priests of ancient Israel (Exod. 28:37-37; 29:6; 39:30; Lev. 8:9). Stevenson notes that, 'The priest's crown in Exodus resembles a diadem more than it does a wreath; yet the original design of the crown may have been replaced with the golden wreath by later Israelites'.¹⁷⁷ The priest's crown was inscribed with the words 'קדש ליהוה' [Holiness to YHWH] (Exod. 28:36; 39:30; b. *Shabb.* 63b).¹⁷⁸ In the context of the throne-room worship the living creatures have recited the Trisagion so it would be quite in keeping for the elders to cast their crowns with this designation, before the throne. Additionally, Haran suggests that the function of the priestly crown was to evoke divine grace.¹⁷⁹ This fits well with the fact that the elders are about to introduce God as the Creator.

vi) Identity of the Elders.

So far we have considered the twenty-four elders against a background of the priesthood and the high priesthood of early Israel. However one more important piece of the puzzle needs to be introduced - John's understanding of Exodus 19:5-6. As part of the Sinai experience, the developing Israelite nation, under the conditions of total obedience to God's word and his covenant, were promised the status of being established as 'a kingdom of priests, a holy nation' [ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש]. John, along with other New Testament writers (cf. 1Pet. 2:5,9), identified the church as being the true Israel which meant that its members had become beneficiaries of these Old Testament promises. In the first chapter of the Apocalypse (Rev. 1:5) the people of God are described as being 'a kingdom and priests' who will serve God. Then later in the new song of Rev. 5:9-10 they are again depicted as being 'a kingdom and priests', but their role is expanded to include reigning on earth. The saints then are described *corporately* as a kingdom under the sovereign rule of God, and *individually* as priestly servants who will one day serve in his presence (Rev. 21:3). The twenty-four elders as the symbolic portrayal of God's people *collectively* rise from their thrones and cast their crowns before God's throne (Rev. 4:10) and *singly* hold a harp and golden bowls full of incense (Rev. 5:8). Lastly, it should be noted that the actions of the elders are rendered in the future tense (Rev. 4:10 'will

¹⁷³ We will discuss in a later section the crowning and the enthroning of humans.

¹⁷⁴ The angels are called 'lords' but there is a hieratic backdrop of hymns and temples.

¹⁷⁵ Stevenson (1995) pg. 257. In his recent article on background of golden crown imagery in Revelation, he investigates the four different concepts of victory, royalty, divine glory, and honor with respect to crowns. He demonstrates that 'the role of crowns in antiquity was so diverse that to confine its meaning to one or two options is inadequate' [pg. 258].

¹⁷⁶ Stevenson (1995) pg. 257. He cites Josephus, *Ant.* 3 §172; *J.W.* 5 §235; Philo, *Mos.* 2 §114-16; Sir. 45:12 as examples.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.* pg. 263. Here he mentions various examples to substantiate this claim.

¹⁷⁸ The reference in Sir. 45:12 states that the crown contained only one word 'ἀγιάσματος' [holiness].

¹⁷⁹ Haran (1978) pg. 215. This has perhaps also been implied earlier with the presence of the rainbow.

fall' [πρὸςοῦνται]; 'will worship' [προσκυνήσουσιν]; and 'will cast' [βαλοῦσιν]).¹⁸⁰ The use of this tense in these verbs prospectively signals the action of the saints. Thus in conclusion, it is our view that the elders are heavenly regal¹⁸¹ priests who are the representation of God's people. They furnish a link into the past to the Jewish priesthood that served in the temple and also into the future to the servants of God in the final vision.¹⁸²

c. Their Celebration of the Creator.

The twenty-four elders now perform their main function which is to offer praise and worship to the One seated on the throne. Rising from their thrones, they prostrate themselves in worship¹⁸³ before God and symbolically cast their crowns before his throne recognising their delegated authority. As part of this whole process, they also sing a song of celebration to the Creator. Unlike the praise of the four living creatures, this song is addressed directly to God, in the second person singular: 'You are worthy'; 'you created'; and 'by your will.' The phrase, 'to receive glory and honour and power,' echoes the portrayal of the living creatures in Rev. 4: 9, who 'give glory and honour and thanks.' The 'thanks' is replaced by 'power' because the creation of everything [τὰ πάντα] was an almighty act of his very will [διὰ τὸ θέλημα]. Some have difficulty with the last colon, 'they existed and were created'¹⁸⁴ However it is not meant to be an exposition on the creation process, but rather a spontaneous outburst of praise for its Originator in poetic form.¹⁸⁵

There are a few significant points that arise from this hymn that are relevant to our studies. 'From beginning to end one encounters in Israel's praises the conviction that the Lord of Israel is the power behind all that is, creating, shaping, making, fashioning, stretching out, measuring, commanding everything into being.'¹⁸⁶ This basic tenet of the early Jewish belief is completely accepted and propagated by John here in his hymn of faith. In fact, the elders' song has quite a few resonances of King David's prayer in 1 Chron. 29:10-13. He addresses God who is 'from everlasting to everlasting' in the second person singular; his praises are in the context of all creation belonging to God who rules over all things; and there are references to 'glory,' 'honour' and 'power.' The transcendent God who is worthy of the 'Thrice Holy' being ceaselessly recited in his eternal presence, is also worthy as the Creator. Thus, there is not an inkling of the Gnostic idea¹⁸⁷ where the Supreme Being is greatly superior to the evil creator god. Lastly, because God is both the Eternal One, 'the one who lives for ever and ever' (Rev. 4:10), and also the Creator, there is the potential that he can re-create. Thus, if it is his will, he can create anew all things, including the heavens and the earth.

D. Implicit Clues to the Shift Towards Immanence in Chapter 4.

The very first verse of the Apocalypse would appear to point to a highly developed sense of the transcendence of God. Here, the revelation is defined as being a five-stage process which consisted of: God > Jesus > Angel > John > Mankind. Our foregoing discussion has also highlighted that one of the main thrusts of the initial section of John's inaugural throne vision is

¹⁸⁰ Rev. 4:9 also records that the four living creatures 'shall give [δώσουσιν] glory, honour and thanks.'

¹⁸¹ Their regal status is virtually forfeited by the dual action of coming off of their thrones and casting down their crowns. This betokens a symbolic expression of worship and submission. They possess their royal position in order to emphasize the ultimate kingly character of the One on the throne.

¹⁸² This aspect will be expanded in the section entitled, 'The Final Throne Vision.'

¹⁸³ Cf. Ps. 72:11; 2Chron. 29:29,30; Job 1:20; Sir. 50:17; 1Macc. 4:55; 1Esd. 9:47; Mat. 2:11; 1Cor. 14:25; TJob. 40:4.

¹⁸⁴ See Aune (1997) pg. 312; Ladd (1991) [pg. 78] for possible solutions to this idea of things existing before they were actually created.

¹⁸⁵ This is also the case, of course, with the creation narrative of Genesis.

¹⁸⁶ Millar (1985) pg. 14.

¹⁸⁷ Pearson (1990) [pp. 7-8] lists ten features of Gnosticism, the third of which is 'a negative, radically dualist stance vis-à-vis the cosmos involves a cosmology, according to which the cosmos itself, having been created by an inferior and ignorant power, is a dark prison in which human souls are held captive.'

its emphasis on the sovereignty and transcendence of God. However, it was noted that this transcendence was not an 'ultra-transcendence,' but rather a more 'moderated transcendence.' The ascent of John to the throne-room was also a very uncomplicated one. Thus, the fact that there was not a long protracted journey through a series of heavens also lessened the feeling of a large transcendent gulf.

We have already inferred in our studies on a few occasions that in this environment, it was possible to unearth some implicit clues which anticipated a prospective move towards an even more immanent position.¹⁸⁸ So what are these embedded markers?

1. L. L. Thompson notes that, 'the use of precious stones in describing the throne scene is not part of the traditional throne scenes in apocalypses. They are used to describe the New Jerusalem, the breastplate of the priest and the garden of Eden.'¹⁸⁹ Thus by describing God in this very unusual way, as 'looking like jasper and carnelian', it most probably foretokens the final vision of the eternal Garden-city. Also, if there is an allusion to the hieratic vestment, then this would also convey the thought of the potential for mediation and intercession.¹⁹⁰

2. Earlier we suggested that the rainbow around the throne perhaps has its roots partly in the sign of the Noahic covenant. If this is the case, then the rainbow, which was a personal memorandum to God himself, signifies peace and compassion.¹⁹¹ Thus, there is another gentle hint to a softening of the transcendence of God and a pointing to the ultimate calm after the storm of judgments which in the Apocalypse was accomplished through a whole series of intermediators.

3. Assuming that our identification of the twenty-four elders as the representation and personification of God's people is correct, then they furnish a glimpse of a future hope for God's servants. However, their inclusion in the inaugural vision symbolises a human presence in heaven so the fact that they can exist in the throne-room, points to a more moderated transcendence. Usually it is only the seer who represents humanity and even then a transformation usually has to take place for him to be admitted into the divine dwelling.¹⁹²

4. In the 'flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder' we have a very clear allusion to the powerful phenomena which accompany a theophany.¹⁹³ This is also yet another rather uncommon feature to be found within the confines of the throne-room. Normally we would suggest that the domain for the phenomenon of theophany is primarily on earth.¹⁹⁴ However John has introduced it into the throne-room, thus giving an implicit link of the earthly with the

¹⁸⁸ It should be noted here that even the presence of the seer in the throne-room indicates a relaxing of the transcendence of God. Schäfer (1992) [pp. 148-149] in the context of the later *hekhalot* literature observes that 'the purpose of the heavenly journey is precisely to span the spatial distance between heaven and earth, man and God, and to penetrate the transcendence of God on his throne in heaven. The message... is that this is possible, that the *yored merkavah* as Israel's emissary can reach the divine throne... the texts leave no doubt that God passionately desires this ascent above all else.'

¹⁸⁹ Thompson (1990) pg. 218 nt. 3. This statement is probably correct as far as it refers to within the *apocalypses*. However it is worth noting that there is a precedence for this description within OT throne-vision scenes. In Exod. 24:10 there is a 'pavement of sapphire' [לכנת הספיר] which refers to a transparent platform or walkway which allowed a view of God. The sapphire stone was the opaque *lapis lazuli* of Mesopotamia which in this context is used to represent the blueness of the sky, 'whilst the pavement suggests the firmament of heaven beneath God's feet' [Hyatt (1971) pg. 159]. Also, again in Ezekiel 1:26 and 10:1 there is the reference to a 'stone of sapphire' [אבן ספיר] which is used to describe the throne.

¹⁹⁰ Beale (1999) [pp. 320-321] observes, 'The three stones in 4:3 are a summary and an anticipation of the fuller list of precious stones in ch. 21, where the glory of God is revealed, not only in heaven, as in 4:3ff., but in consummated form throughout the new creation.'

¹⁹¹ Cf. Heb Vis. III 7 'when the rainbow appears then God (remembers) and pitieth his creatures.'

¹⁹² In other throne-visions, the other main groups of mortals to have this privilege are the Old Testament patriarchs and worthies, and the New Testament apostles who are, of course, among the hierarchy of God's people. However they are, more often than not, envisaged as being, not in the throne-room, but rather in a paradisiacal setting.

¹⁹³ See Barr (1959) [pp. 31-38] for his article which deals with theophany and anthropomorphism in the Old Testament.

¹⁹⁴ So, for example: Abraham's experience in Genesis 18; the burning bush witnessed by Moses in Exodus 3; and the experience of Exod. 19 when God meets Moses on the mountain.

heavenly.¹⁹⁵ The throne-scene vision of Isaiah 6 is relevant to us here, as it also contains a theophanic display within the temple. For our purposes here it is not really too important whether the location of this temple is on earth or in heaven. If it is the earthly temple then God's robe provides a symbolic link between earth and heaven. If it is the heavenly temple, then there are these theophanic elements in Isaiah's vision along with its more anthropomorphic representation of God. So either way, there are clear associations to our vision here in Revelation 4.

5. Although John's primary goal is to highlight the transcendence of God in this chapter, there is no reference to various levels of angels. We have to wait until chapter 5 before we realise that there are any angels in heaven (Rev. 5:11). Furthermore, although they appear throughout the book it is mainly either as the *angelus interpres* for John, or as agents of judgment. This omission from chapter 4 and also the lack of various levels of angels is significant. Because, 'fundamentally the whole of angelology was an indication that the figure of God had receded into the distance and that angels were needed as intermediaries between him, creation and man... This strictly-ordered, pyramid-like hierarchical system probably corresponded to a general religious need of the time, as it exercised a profound influence, not only on the Greek-speaking Judaism of the Diaspora and early Christianity, but through them on gnosticism and indeed on the whole popular religion in late antiquity, as is shown by its significance for magic. Even neo-Platonism could not escape its influence.'¹⁹⁶ This concept is alien to our seer's heavenly panorama.

6. Finally in this section, we have the disclosure by the twenty-four elders which reveals that there is not a dichotomy between the Supreme Being and a lesser god who created the cosmos and its contents. The transcendent One seated on the throne is also the Creator and the sustaining God (Rev. 4:11). This link had, of course, already been suggested. The group which had initiated the praise in heaven by their ceaseless singing of the 'Thrice Holy,' was none other than the four highest representatives of the different spheres of creation. Not only had they the honour of being the catalyst, as it were, which would set in motion a wave of praise that would ripple out to the extremities of the universe (Rev. 5:13), but they also occupied the prime position 'around the throne and on each side of the throne.' At this stage, a representation of the created order could not have had a closer location to the One seated on the throne.

¹⁹⁵ As a matter of fact, as we have already seen, this theophanic phenomenon will be experienced very soon on the earth. However in its increasing violent progression, this relatively benign form displayed in the throne-room will include the destructive elements of earthquake, heavy hail, and large hail-stones.

¹⁹⁶ Hengel (1974) I, pg. 233.

IV Investiture and Worship of the Lamb [Revelation 5].

The two main themes of chapter 5 are the scroll [βιβλίον] and the Lamb [ἀρνίον] which are closely linked together. The transfer of the sealed scroll from God to the Lamb, as will become apparent, functions as a symbol of the unique role of Christ as the Lamb who is worthy to open the scroll because of his death.

There have been various discussions as to whether this section of the vision constitutes an enthronement, a commissioning, and/or an investiture scene. The view of this chapter being seen as the enthronement of the Lamb is based on the belief that it is patterned around the ancient mythological models of enthronement and coronation. Several variations on this theme have been proposed.¹ However W. C. van Unnik has presented a comprehensively convincing argument against this particular stance that Revelation 5 portrays an enthronement or coronation scene.² The thrust of the argument revolves around two principal points. Firstly, it is futile to attempt to force the pericope of Rev. 5 into some manufactured model of a coronation ritual.³ Secondly, and more importantly, there is the dearth of any actual reference to enthronement, its ritual or regalia within the chapter itself.

However, there certainly are some traditional motifs to be located in this chapter which echo those found in the commissioning scenes of the Old Testament:⁴

- a) A worthy volunteer is sought by a question being asked (2Kgs. 22:20; Isa. 6:8).⁵
- b) The volunteer approaches the throne (2Kgs. 22:21; Dan. 7:13; cf. Ezek. 2:1; Isa. 6:8).
- c) The one commissioned receives a scroll (Ezek. 2:9-3:3).

Nevertheless, D. E. Aune⁶ is correct to suggest the word 'investiture' for the scene in our present chapter, since 'investiture' can be defined as 'the ratification of the office that someone already holds informally.' Thus the Lamb is worthy because of his sacrificial death. The essence of his worthiness has already been established, and there is nothing added to that condition by him receiving the scroll. He is worthy not only to receive the scroll but also to open it. This is a process which will be set in motion in the chapters which are to follow.

A. The Scroll.

One of the main tasks of John, in an otherwise rather passive experience, was to act as an amanuensis. Throughout the book, John is frequently given the command to write. So it is unsurprising that written compositions play an important role in Revelation. The whole book is referred to in Rev. 1:11;⁷ 22:7, 9-10, 18-19. The book of life is mentioned in the context of the books being opened (Rev. 20:12,15), and also in Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 21:27. A 'little scroll' makes an appearance (or perhaps reappearance, see below) in Rev. 10:2ff.. Lastly, there is the seven-sealed scroll of Rev. 5:1ff., the object of our immediate interest.

1. Suggested Identities and Descriptions of the Scroll.

Nestling in the hand of the One seated on the throne was a scroll [βιβλίον]. This opisthograph is a very important item because it provides a divine, direct link between the One seated on the throne and the Lamb and it establishes his mandate. There have been various suggestions as to its identity and thus its contents. It has been linked to the Lamb's book of life,⁸ however G. B.

¹ See Aune (1997) [pp. 332-334] for a comprehensive overview of this position and its adherents.

² Unnik (1970) pp. 447-448. See also, Aune (1997) [pg. 335] for a supplement to these arguments.

³ See Aune (1997) pg. 336.

⁴ See Habel (1965) pp. 297-323; Long (1976) pp. 353-365.

⁵ Cf. Job 1:8; 2:3.

⁶ Aune (1997) pg. 336.

⁷ Interestingly, Barr (1986) [pg. 247] takes this verse to refer only to the letters to the seven churches and as such he calls it 'the scroll of letters.'

⁸ Jeremias (1905) pg. 17.

Caird⁹ has put forward various arguments against this particular hypothesis.¹⁰ Some other commentators have seen it as being the Old Testament,¹¹ the Jewish Torah¹² or perhaps even its fifth book, Deuteronomy.¹³

The scroll is portrayed as being 'written on the inside and on the back'

[γεγραμμένον ἔσωθεν καὶ ὀπίσθεν] which has led some commentators to link it to Ancient Near Eastern deed or contract documents.¹⁴ However, there is also a clear allusion to Ezekiel 2:9-10 where the prophet is said to have seen a 'roll of a book' [מגלת ספר] in the right hand of God which 'was written on the face and the back' [כחובה פנים ואחור].¹⁵ G. B. Caird¹⁶ suggests that symbolically, it is 'probably meant as an indication of the fulness and precision of the divine foreknowledge.'

The second descriptive detail of the scroll is that it was 'sealed with seven seals'

[κατεσφραγισμένον σφραγῖσιν ἑπτὰ]. Some have linked this description with the apparent Roman custom of sealing a will with seven seals,¹⁷ and thus identifying the scroll as the 'Testament of God.'¹⁸ Others have postulated various ingenious explanations as to its actual construction and the process of opening such an item.¹⁹ However it is probably best to understand this detail simply as a literary device to introduce the following unfolding series of judgments,²⁰ while the significance of the *seven* demonstrates the comprehensiveness of the scroll itself, and thus the complete appropriateness of the one who is capable of opening it.

2. The Link with the Little Scroll of Rev. 10:2ff.

The question needs to be asked, "Is there a possible correlation between or even an actual equivalence of this scroll and 'the little scroll' [βιβλαρίδιον] mentioned in Rev. 10:2ff.?" Most commentators would respond in the negative, identifying this second scroll, for example as: the Christian gospel,²¹ a prophetic vision of the antichrist's reign,²² the scroll of heavenly signs,²³ or a special revelation which has the register of those who were to die 'for adhering to God's word and to the testimony which they bore.'²⁴

One of the main stumbling blocks to equating the two scrolls is that there are different words used to describe them (in chapter 5, βιβλίον and in chapter 10, βιβλαρίδιον). However this problem can be remedied on two counts. Firstly, in every occurrence of the term in chapter 10 there are textual variants, and at least in Rev. 10:8 βιβλίον would appear to be the best reading.

⁹ Caird (1966) pp. 70-71.

¹⁰ In the Gnostic tractate *Gospel of Truth* 19.27-24.9 there is an in-depth analysis of the imagery of the Book. The earlier part of this section was clearly influenced by the Apocalypse as it links the Book of Life with the Scroll of Rev. 5. Thus, there is 'the living book of the living' [19.35-36] 'which was from before the foundation of totality' [20.1-2 cf. Rev. 13:8; 17:8] 'which no one was able to take' [20.4 cf. Rev. 5:4] 'since it remains for the one who will take it to be slain' [20.5-6 cf. Rev. 5:6] 'Jesus, was patient in accepting sufferings until he took that book.' [20.11-12 cf. Rev. 5:7]. See Attridge (1985) [pp. 87ff.] for the text, and Attridge (1985A) [pp. 35ff.] for notes on the text.

¹¹ Piper (1951) pg. 13.

¹² Ford (1975) pg. 87.

¹³ Mowry (1952) pp. 82-83.

¹⁴ Bornkamm (1959) pg. 205. See, Roller (1937) [pp. 98ff.] for a comprehensive history of such legal forms.

¹⁵ See, Holtz (1971) [pg. 32] for argument against this view.

¹⁶ Caird (1966) pg. 72.

¹⁷ See, Sweet (1979) pp. 122-123.

¹⁸ So Zahn III pp. 393ff. However, see Beckwith (1919) [pg. 506] for more references and rebuttal. See Ford (1975) [pp. 84, 92-94] for various other suggestions which include 'the Lamb's bill of divorce.'

¹⁹ For a treatment of its form; as an opisthograph, a *Doppelurkunde*, as 'seven separate leaves rolled one on the top of the other and sealed, and as a codex,' see Aune (1997) pp 341-343.

²⁰ So, Mowry (1952) pg. 82. However Caird (1966) [pg. 71] relates the accompanying events to the contents of the book.

²¹ Piper (1951) pg. 15.

²² Charles (1920) I [pp. 260, 269] the contents being limited to Rev. 11:1-13.

²³ Barr (1986) pp. 248-9.

²⁴ Kiddle (1940) pg. 168.

Secondly, it has been convincingly established that these two terms can be used synonymously.²⁵ In light of this some commentators have gone as far as to suggest that because of the striking similarities a close connection between the two scrolls is probable.²⁶ Other have gone still further by asserting that the two scrolls are in fact identical.²⁷ For this identification several reasons have been forwarded, and also if the scrolls are identical, then further insight into its character can be gleaned from its depiction in chapter 10.²⁸

The reasons are as follows:

- a) There is a clear literary link: the reiteration of the mighty angel seen in Rev. 5:2 and Rev. 10:1.
- b) The pattern of allusion to the prophetic commissioning of Ezekiel (Ezek. 2:8-3:3) demonstrates that John intended Rev. 5 and 10 to portray a single account of his personal receiving of a prophetic revelation that the scroll betokened.
- c) It solves the enigma of the nature and contents of the scroll in Rev. 5 which is obviously of great import. It contains the divine design, previously concealed, for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. This is the prophecy to be given to John, which will be disclosed in summary in the ensuing chapter (Rev. 11:1-13).
- d) John understood his present to be the final throes of history. If he also understood Dan. 12:9 to refer to a heavenly scroll containing the divine purpose which would remain sealed until the end-times, then this clearly furnishes a link between the *sealed* scroll of Rev. 5 and that of Rev. 10 which contains God's final purposes for the planet.
- e) The highly elaborate, and at times unparalleled, description of the angel (Rev. 10:1-3) means that he is uniquely important. In fact, that this is an angel also mentioned in Rev. 1:1 and Rev. 22:16 becomes apparent when the scroll that the angel brings to John in Rev. 10:2 is identified as the scroll seen in heaven in Rev. 5:1-9. Thus the chain of revelation outlined in Rev. 1:1 (God > Jesus Christ > angel > John) is clearly represented by the scroll being given to John by the angel (Rev. 10:1-10), who received it from the hand of the Lamb, who opened it after receiving it from the hand of the One who sits on the throne (Rev. 5:6-7).

Thus with this defence, it is reasonable to view our scroll here in chapter 5 as being equivalent to the 'little scroll' of chapter 10. The scroll is a good example of how John so frequently develops motifs, not only through his throne-vision scenes, but also throughout the whole book. This is a subject to which we shall return. However, for the present, we have perhaps already travelled too far ahead. Our immediate task is to focus on the recipient of this scroll who makes this redemptive plan possible by his sacrificial yet victorious death and resurrection.

B. The Lamb.

The final major member of the *Dramatis Personae* is presently going to come into view and take centre stage - a 'Lamb' [ἀρνίον]²⁹ (Rev. 5:6). This is the main Christological title found in Revelation. It is used twenty-eight times³⁰ in reference to the exalted Jesus, thus implying the significance of this seemingly curious appellation. However, firstly, in this section of the vision he is given the titles the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah' and the 'Root of David' (Rev. 5:5). Then, as the Lamb, he is described 'as if having been slain' and 'having seven horns and seven eyes,

²⁵ See Bauckham (1993) pp. 243-245. He demonstrates that at this stage the diminutive form of a word frequently no longer carried that nuance of meaning. Also, the other known usage of βιβλαρίδιον in Greek literature is found in the contemporary Shepherd of Hermas. In this work, βιβλαρίδιον and βιβλίον are not only used synonymously, but they are also applied in a similar context of prophetic revelation given by a heavenly figure. See also Mazzaferri (1989) pp. 267ff.

²⁶ Beale (1999) pg. 527; See also Prigent (1964) pg. 151.

²⁷ So Mazzaferri (1989) [pp. 264-279] as part of his argument that Rev. 10 is John's personal call narrative. See also Bauckham (1993) [pp. 243-257] in his discussion on the conversion of the nations.

²⁸ The points that follow are a summary of Bauckham (1993) pp. 245-257.

²⁹ For an examination of the lexical background of ἀρνίον see Fekkes (1994) pp. 153-154.

³⁰ See Bauckham (1993A) [pp 66-67], for some interesting statistics of 28 (7 X 4) times.

which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth' (Rev. 5:6). However, this is the one who has conquered (Rev. 5:5 cf. 3:21) and therefore the one who is able to open the scroll (Rev. 5:5). It is this complete identification that has made him uniquely worthy to open the scroll's seals (Rev. 5:9) and to receive praise ordinarily reserved only for God (Rev. 5:11-14).

1. The Titles of the Conquering Messiah that John Hears.

These first two designations which are given to the Christ clearly have a background in the Old Testament. They point to the hope of a future conquering Messiah who would appear for the salvation of his people.

*a. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah.*³¹

This title, which has Jewish messianic overtones echoes Gen. 49:9-10 where Judah is described as a young lion³² associated with the regal emblems of the office (the sceptre and ruler's staff). In 4 Ezra, perhaps a contemporary work to Revelation, the Messiah is described as a roaring lion.³³ Thus there was this great expectation of a powerful champion who would be worthy of these accolades.

b. The Root of David.

This phrase is used twice in Revelation, here and also in the last chapter where it again refers to Jesus (Rev. 22:16).³⁴ This is another allusion to the Old Testament, this time found in the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 11:1, 10).³⁵ There then follows a description of an individual on whom the spirit of the Lord will rest (Isa. 11:2); he will be wise and God-fearing (Isa. 11:2-3); he will rule and judge with righteousness (Isa. 11:4); and he will strike and destroy the wicked (Isa. 11:4). There will be ushered in a period when all nature will co-exist in peaceful harmony, and there will be not only physical, but also social, political and spiritual renewal. These were powerful designations, attributed to an individual, for a nation that was subjected to the dominance of an alien super-power. In the Jewish milieu of John's day, many patriotic hearts had been engendered with fermenting feelings of militant messianism.

2. The Slaughtered Lamb that John Sees.

With these impressive credentials that he has just received from one of the elders still ringing in his ears, John looks towards the centre of the throne-room to glimpse a view of this conqueror. However, the object that comes into his field of vision is a Lamb, and not only that, it appears as if it has been slaughtered.³⁶ Commentators have pointed out the importance of distinguishing between what is heard and what is seen throughout the book of Revelation.³⁷ In this particular case, contemporary Jewish eschatological hopes have been reinterpreted in Christian terms. So, John initially 'evokes the idea of the Messiah as the Jewish nationalistic military conqueror and then reinterprets it by means of the notion of sacrificial death for the redemption of people from all nations' (Rev. 5:9-10).³⁸ G. B. Caird expresses it succinctly when he observes that the Lamb 'is the symbol of self-sacrifice and redemptive love.'³⁹

³¹ In his list of tribes in Rev. 7:5ff, Judah is the first tribe to be mentioned. Cf. Heb. 7:14, Jesus is descended from the tribe of Judah.

³² Ford (1975) [pg. 85] suggests that 'the lion was an emblem of strength, majesty, courage, and menace'.

³³ In the fifth vision and its interpretation in 4 Ezra (11:37; 12:32) this epithet is found, and also in this section the Messiah is said to arise from the posterity of David (12:32).

³⁴ Cf. Mk. 12:35; Jn. 7:42; Rom. 1:3-4; 15:12; 2Tim. 2:8.

³⁵ See Fekkes (1994) [pp. 150-153] for a discussion of the reference to 'the root of David' in these verses. Cf. Sir. 47:22.

³⁶ Barr (1984) [pg. 42] describes this as 'the most dramatic transvaluation' in the Apocalypse, where John 'completely reverses the value of certain symbols of power and conquest by transforming them into images of suffering and weakness.'

³⁷ So, for instance, Caird (1966) pg. 73; Sweet (1979) pg. 125; Bauckham (1988) pg. 20. See Rowland (1998) [pp. 622-623] for a comprehensive list of what is heard and what is seen throughout the book of Revelation.

³⁸ Bauckham (1988) pg. 20.

³⁹ Caird (1966) pg. 74.

a. The Background to the Title.

Several traditions and combinations of traditions have been proposed as the source of the image of the lamb that John uses here. Various commentators have forwarded the following options:⁴⁰ i) The astrological ram; ii) The apocalyptic warrior lamb/ram; iii) The daily sacrifice lamb; iv) The lamb of Isaiah 53; v) The paschal lamb; vi) The paschal lamb and warrior lamb; vii) The paschal lamb and the lamb of Isaiah 53. Giving due cognition to John's penchant for merging images, at this stage the combination of the paschal lamb and the lamb of Isaiah 53 seems a promising option. In support of the first part of this composite image, we find throughout the book of Revelation, John frequently redevelops the exodus theme. A few verses later (Rev. 5:9-10) we learn that by his sacrificial death Christ has redeemed a group of people who will be a kingdom and priests serving God. This is a clear echo of the words of God to Moses, concerning the Israelites, spoken as part of the covenant at Sinai (Exod. 19:5-6).⁴¹ However, in our context here, this image needs to be developed more fully. To do this we must turn to the Servant Song of Isaiah 53.⁴² Here there is a description of an individual who is led as a lamb to the slaughter (Isa. 53:6) and as a result of his death he bore the sins of many (Isa. 53:13). These passages had already been used in both a paschal Christology⁴³ and a Servant Christology⁴⁴ within the New Testament writings; thus for John to combine them accords well with this background.

b. Further Descriptions.

John's description of the Lamb is not yet finished. We now learn that it possesses 'seven horns' (Rev. 5:6), which is unambiguous evidence of its inherent power. The horn was a common biblical symbol of strength (Deut. 33:17; 2Sam. 22:3; Pss. 18:2; 112:9).⁴⁵ Perhaps there is another nuance here which would denote an allusion to a warrior lamb.⁴⁶ Thus, although the main thrust of John's imagery here is certainly that of the slaughtered lamb, there is also the representation of its underlying latent power which will be revealed to the world in the conquering Christophany of Rev. 19:11-16.

Then lastly, it is described as having 'seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth' (Rev. 5:6).⁴⁷ This detail links back, as we have already seen, to Rev. 1:4 where the seven spirits are mentioned in the Trinitarian greeting, then in Rev. 4:5 where they are described as 'seven flaming torches.' Now, as John often does, he expands their description a little more by referring to Zech. 4:10, and they are dispatched through the world. Thus, John now connects the Lamb with God's active universal presence which is accomplished by the working of his Spirit.

⁴⁰ See Fekkes (1994) [pp. 155-158] for a list of commentators' preferences and also a discussion on the subject.

⁴¹ Cf. Rev. 1:5-6.

⁴² So Sweet (1979) pg. 124; Bauckham (1994) pg. 215; Beale (1999) pp. 351ff.; Barker (2000) pp. 133ff.

However against this view see Fekkes (1994) pp. 155-158. For a review of the various positions, see Aune (1997) *Excursus 5A: Christ as the Lamb* pp. 367-373. For an examination of the Lamb motif throughout Revelation, see Hohnjec (1980).

⁴³ 1Cor. 5:7; 1Pet. 1:19; cf. Rev. 15:2-3.

⁴⁴ Mat. 8:17; 12:18-21; Acts 8:32; 1Pet. 2:22-25. Cf. Jn. 1:29, 39 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.' For a discussion on the meaning and background of this reference, see Barrett (1954-55).

⁴⁵ Cf. 1En. 90:38; 3En. 22:8; *b Hag* 13a. Also, Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3,12.

⁴⁶ See further Beasley-Murray (1974) pp 124-25; Ford (1975) pp. 88-91; Mounce (1977) pg. 145.

⁴⁷ Most commentators link only 'the seven eyes' with 'the seven spirits of God'. However it is possible that 'the seven horns' are also associated with 'the seven spirits of God'. If this was the writer's intention then the power (horns) would be an attribute of the Spirit. If this is the case then John could well be alluding to Zech. 4:6 'This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the LORD of Hosts.'

C. The Universal Adoration.

When the Lamb had received the scroll from the hand of the One seated on the throne, this caused the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures to fall down before the Lamb (Rev. 5:8). This is significant⁴⁸ because the only other time both groups prostrate themselves in unison is in their last appearance prior to the 'marriage supper of the Lamb,' where they fall down before God who is seated on his throne (Rev. 19:4).⁴⁹ The elders are holding harps and golden bowls full of incense as we discussed earlier, but there is no indication that they play the instruments, nor is the incense used at this stage. In fact this is also the case later on in the book where it is others who take over these tasks - an angel offers the incense (Rev. 8:3-4) and the victorious saints hold the harps of God (Rev. 15:2).

The elders also sing a new song which triggers an ever-increasing chain reaction, involving two more songs, which will culminate in a crescendo encompassing the entire animate creation. The fact that these hymns are being sung in praise of someone other than the One seated on the throne is very significant.⁵⁰ It emphasises the divinity of the Lamb because for John true worship was solely the prerogative of the divine.

1. The New Song.

The new song [ὡδὴν καινὴν] was a common motif in the Hebrew Bible⁵¹ and in other Jewish literature.⁵² John's use of this term fits well with the quoted Old Testament sources because in Revelation it celebrates the new act of redemption,⁵³ the new exodus,⁵⁴ and the eschatologically new act of salvation. 'It is not simply new in point of time, but more important, it is new and distinctive in quality,'⁵⁵ and this will lead us eventually to the declaration from God himself that he is making all things new (Rev. 21:5).⁵⁶

This song starts in the same way as the elders' celebration of the Creator (Rev. 4:11); using the second person singular they confirm that the Lamb is also worthy. The justification for the Lamb receiving similar praise to the One seated on the throne is because of his vicarious death. The result of his sacrifice is to redeem⁵⁷ a body of believers for God.⁵⁸ The saints will have an universal basis with no racial, cultural, political or national restrictions. They will be procured

⁴⁸ It is significant because here in Rev. 5:10 they identify the saints in song as a 'kingdom and priests' for the first time and the elders are the representatives of the saints. Then in Rev. 19:4 this is the last time we hear from them as they bow out of the scene because they have finished their work. The reason is because the very next event to take place is the marriage supper of the Lamb. This is the ceremony which sets the seal on this notion of the saints serving and ruling in the final eternal state.

⁴⁹ Cf. Rev. 4:10 the elders fall down before the One seated on the throne; Rev. 5:14, the elders fall down but the object of their worship is not precisely stipulated; Rev. 7:11 where all the angels fall down before the throne and God; and Rev. 11:16 where the elders fall before God.

⁵⁰ One has to go to the much later *hekhalot* text of 3 Enoch for anything remotely like this (angels honouring superior angels). However, see Stuckenbruck (1995) pp. 94ff., for comment on the angelic praise in the ascent of Abraham in the Apocalypse of Abraham.

⁵¹ Pss. 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; Isa. 42:10. The new song is also mentioned alongside the harp or similar musical instrument in Pss. 33:2,3; 144:9; 149:1-3.

⁵² Jdt. 16:13; PsSol. 3:1; LadJac 2:16; *Hek. Zut.* § 418.

⁵³ See Pss. 40:3; 96:1; 144:9.

⁵⁴ See especially the new exodus context of Isa. 42:10.

⁵⁵ Mounce (1984) pg. 147.

⁵⁶ 'Newness' is a continuing theme in Revelation. There is reference again to a new song in Rev. 14:3; a new name (Rev. 2:17; 3:12); the new Jerusalem (Rev. 3:12; 21:2); and a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1).

⁵⁷ Cf. Mk. 10:45; 1Cor. 6:20; 1Tim. 2:6; 1Pet. 1:18.

⁵⁸ In Rev. 14:1-5, there is a similar background of harps and a new song. Here the redeemed, the first fruits from humanity, are for God and the Lamb (Rev. 14:5).

'from every tribe and language and people and nation' (Rev. 5:9).⁵⁹ In the list of nations in Genesis 10, are found the only examples in the Old Testament of this fourfold designation used to classify humanity. There are three references used in Gen. 10:5, 20, 31.⁶⁰ In Rev. 5:10 there is another reminder that the redeemed belong to God, where they function as a kingdom and priests serving him.⁶¹ At this stage in John's *Weltanschauung* the domain of their rule is terrestrial.⁶²

2 The Celestial Choir.

The complete celestial choir now accompanies the living creatures and the elders. Once again we are reminded that the Lamb is worthy because of his sacrificial death. There are seven terms used in the praise of the Lamb. Four of them are the attributes of which the Lamb is the worthy possessor: power, wealth, wisdom, and might. The remaining three expressions of which he is a worthy recipient are honor, glory, and blessing⁶³ (cf. the sevenfold blessing in Rev. 12:7 which is directed towards God).

3. The Pan-creational Crescendo.

All creation unites in this final hymn of worship: 'every creature in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and in the sea.' John then adds the emphatic proviso 'and all that is in them' For every breath of life the created are dependent on the Creator and, for this one moment of existence, John conveys the voice of creation in complete unity in praise of their Maker, the One seated on the throne and the Lamb.⁶⁴ The four living creatures then finish with an 'Amen,' and the elders fall down in worship. Thus, John has given us, in these words, a window into the future, final consummation when the new heaven and the new earth become one entity in total harmony.

D The Shift Towards Immanence in Chapter 5.

In this section we will again enumerate the various signs of the 'softening of the transcendence' of the One on the throne, as we did at the end of chapter 4. As we have already emphasised, one of the main reasons for this inaugural vision, and especially chapter 4, is to highlight the transcendence of God. One of the methods that John uses to do this is to refer to God as the 'One seated on the throne' (with its variations). Thus he reinforces his purpose, when he uses this designation, no less than six times in this initial vision. These references in this vision account for fifty percent of all occurrences of this title throughout the whole book of Revelation. It is with this same epithet that God is introduced in the first verse of chapter 5. However as we will now discover John will again progress towards a more immanent position in his characterisation of God.

1. We are given the first anthropomorphic description of God. John mentions that the scroll which he holds is in his right hand. The Greek of this term could legitimately be taken as

⁵⁹ This fourfold phrase occurs seven times, with variation, throughout the book. It appears in our verse here and in Rev. 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; and 17:15.

⁶⁰ See Bauckham (1993) pg. 326ff.. It should be noted that the threefold phrase found in Dan. 3:4 'peoples, nations and languages,' is enlarged in the LXX by the addition of the word χώραι [places].

⁶¹ As we mentioned earlier in this section, there is a clear allusion to Exod. 19:5-6. Here John gives the phrase an universal application. Cf. Rev. 1:5-6 and 20:6.

⁶² See Beale (1999) [pp. 364-366] for a discussion on the tense of the verb used here. He rightly argues that the present tense is the correct option (cf. Ps. 115:16). However this has to be seen in the light of the fact that the new creation has already commenced through Christ's death and resurrection (Rev. 3:14; cf. 2Cor. 5:15-17; Gal. 6:14-15; Eph. 2:10,15; and Col. 1:18).

⁶³ There are clear echoes here again to 1Chron. 29:10-12. See Morris (1984) pg 99; Mounce (1984) [pg. 150] for references in the NT where these qualities are ascribed to Christ.

⁶⁴ Cf. Ps. 148; Ps. 150:6 'Let everything that breathes praise the LORD! Praise the LORD'; Phil. 9-11. See Nitzan (1994) [pp. 163-183] for this concept of the earthly and heavenly combining in praise of God in the poetic and liturgical writings from Qumran. Cf. the response of Wolfson (1994) pp. 185-202.

merely meaning 'on the right' [ἐπὶ τὴν δεξιάν] of the One on the throne (Rev. 5:1).⁶⁵

Nevertheless, for the detailed description of the scroll to be clearly visible would signify a lessening of blinding brilliance of the gemstones (Rev. 4:3) and therefore of the transcendence.

2. The seer has the freedom to express his great emotional disappointment by weeping openly.⁶⁶

3. In the description of the Lamb we learn that the very Spirit of God, which is portrayed, at this stage, as the seven eyes representing the seven spirits is sent out into all the earth. Thus, this universal presence of God through his Spirit, provides an appropriate antidote to the roving commission of the Satan (Job 1:7; 2:2).

4. Now for the first time in the vision an individual is mentioned not in the context of the worship of the One on the throne. This special individual can approach the throne and not only that, he can receive the scroll from the hand of God. Furthermore of course, momentarily, this person will immediately be worshipped on a par with the One seated on the throne.

5. The elders hold golden bowls of incense. Although there is no mention of the incense being used at present, the storage of this symbol of the saints' prayers in golden bowls and within the very presence of God himself, demonstrates their worth to God. Thus the potential here for the sweet aroma of incense to be experienced by God signifies also the possibility of the communication of the saints with the One seated on the throne.

6. The elders also each hold harps, and although there is not reference to them being instrumentalists, they do sing a new song which embodies the pre-eminent reason for this whole shift from absolute transcendence to a more immanent position. The new song introduces the new relationship between God and humanity.

7. The Lamb by his death and resurrection has furnished the means to bridge the gap that had existed between the Creator and his creation. A plan of salvation has been set in motion, so that a people can be redeemed for God.

8. Finally, as a foretaste of a future day, earth symbolically joins heaven in a song which resounds throughout the cosmos. This is not only a musical, but also an unitive harmony recognising the persons of the One seated on the throne and the Lamb, and also their eternal existence.

⁶⁵ Further on in the passage (Rev. 5:7) the scroll is described as being taken 'out of the right [hand]' (ἐκ τῆς δεξιᾶς).

⁶⁶ Mounce (1984) [pp. 144] mentions Lk. 19:41 as a similar use of κλαίω. This is the reference to Christ crying in compassion over the city of Jerusalem.

V Motifs and Features Absent from the Inaugural Vision.

A. Introduction.

A cursory review of the book of Revelation reveals a number of general differences between it and other apocalyptic works. As mentioned previously, it exhibits a literary unity, there are many hymnic compositions, it is couched in an epistolary framework, it contains a large quantity of intricate visionary material with extended throne-room experiences and it is concerned with the final eschatological consummation. Negatively, there is the lack of: pseudonymity; *ex eventu* prophecies; an extended review of history;¹ cosmological details; fictitious antiquity; the extended² description of the torment of the unrighteous dead; and the concealment of the message for a future time.³

As we look at the throne-room scenes, and especially at the inaugural throne-vision,⁴ there are also various differences uncovered when it is compared with other throne-room scenes. Some of these variations have been highlighted already when we considered the various features and components that are involved in John's experience of the heavenly scene. However, we shall now examine more particularly a number of missing features which are noteworthy for the purposes of our study.

B. The Missing Altar.

1. Background within the Cult.

Altars always played a central role in the Israelite religion. They could be made of earth, unhewn stone, metal, or wood covered with precious metal. They were built by the patriarchs, priests, prophets and even kings, and could function as monuments (Gen. 12:8; 26:25) or even places of refuge (Exod. 21:14; cf. 1Kgs. 1:50; 2:28). However, our interest lies with those altars associated with the Temple. In the outer courtyard there was the prominent bronze altar of sacrifice (2Chron. 4:1),⁵ and within the sanctuary the golden altar (1Kgs 6:20; 7:48; cf. Exod. 30:1-10).⁶

Aesthetically and functionally, there were certainly differences between these two altars. The former was associated with slaughter, blood and the charred carcasses of animals, while the latter was made of gold with the sweet aroma of incense wafting from it. The symbolism of the altar is found within some of the throne visions of the Old Testament.

In Ezekiel's first vision (Ezek. 1:13), the enclosed area between the living creatures contained 'burning coals' [נחל־אש בִּעֲרוֹת] 'like torches' [הִלְפָּדִים] (cf. Gen. 15:17.).⁷ There is a link here with

¹ The qualifying adjective 'extended' is used here because, depending on one's interpretation of the Apocalypse, it could be argued that the first five seals depict history from the crucifixion to John's time.

² As in the previous note the adjective 'extended' is again used because of the brief reference in Rev. 14:10 to the torment of those who worshipped the beast.

³ See Ladd (1957) [pp. 94-100] for a discussion on some of these differences and his argument that Revelation has an unique distinctiveness and a superiority that distinguishes it from the majority of apocalyptic writings.

⁴ Our main focus in this part of our study will be the vision of Rev 4 & 5. Nevertheless in some cases, such as the lack of fear shown by the seer and the lack of hostility shown towards him, these are common features throughout the whole book. However, the altar is omitted from the inaugural vision and does appear at later stages in the book. Nevertheless we will be made aware of its omission again from the final vision.

⁵ In reference to the tabernacle, the altar (Exod. 27:1-8; 38:1-7) was also called the bronze altar (Exod. 38:30; 39:39) and the altar of burnt offering (Exod. 30:28; 31:9).

⁶ These two altars were also to be found in the Second Temple.

⁷ It does not actually mention an altar in Ezekiel's throne-visions, however the square enclosure between the 'living creatures' could, with a little imagination, resemble an elementary altar.

Isaiah 6:6 where a 'burning coal' [רֶצֶפֶת] is taken from the altar. However there is a difference in the function of the 'burning coals'. In Ezekiel 10:2, they are going to be applied in judgment as they are sprinkled over the city of Jerusalem. In Isaiah 6:6 a single coal is used to purge the prophet's sin.

2. The Altar in Later Literature.

The mention of an actual heavenly altar in later Jewish and Christian literature is not very common. In some passages an altar can be assumed. Thus, in the *Sabbath Songs* there is focus on the role of the angels as priests in the heavenly temple, and in 11Q17 frgs. 21-22 there is a reference to them conducting the heavenly sacrificial service. Also in TLevi 3:5 the angels of the presence of the Lord minister and make propitiation to the Lord for all the sins of ignorance of the righteous and they offer to the Lord a pleasant odour, a reasonable and bloodless offering.⁸

However in other passages there are explicit references to an altar. In GLAE 33:4 the angels who had preceded the chariot of God perform a religious ceremony before the celestial altar with frankincense, golden censers, and three bowls. Their actions cause the fumes of incense to blacken the sky. In *b. Hag.* 12b there is an altar in the 4th heaven, *Zebul* where Michael, the great Prince offers up a sacrifice. The Christian Apocalypse of Paul contains two references to an altar. Firstly in ApPaul 29 there is a 'very high altar' in the city of Christ where David, with psalter and harp, sings, 'Hallelujah!'. Then in ApPaul 44, there is the altar, the veil and the throne and the smoke of a good odour rose up beside the altar of the throne of God. Finally in another Christian work, *Epistula Apostolorum* (Ep. Apost. 13) there is 'the altar of the Father' in the fifth firmament of heaven.

3. The Altar in Revelation.

Apart from the references in Revelation, the only other place within the New Testament where the word 'altar' [θυσιαστήριον] is used figuratively is in Heb. 13:10. Here the word is used by metonymy for 'sacrifice' and thus refers to the sacrifice of Christ.⁹ However, as we will see, John's symbolism is completely different. The word 'altar' is used seven times in Revelation to describe the heavenly altar (Rev. 6:9; 8:3(2x); 8:5; 9:13; 14:18; 16:7).¹⁰ Some commentators have suggested that there are two heavenly altars.¹¹ However we will argue that there is but one altar which is an amalgam of both the altar of incense and the altar of burnt offering.

It has been proposed that it would be unlikely for a Jew familiar with the Hebrew Bible to conflate the two altars with different functions. However we suggest the following points against this:

- a) This is exactly what John would do because, for him, the altars were now defunct, (this is especially true of the altar of burnt offering). Their old functions had been made redundant through Christ's death as there was no need for animal sacrifices, and intercession could be made directly to God's throne. Thus John is going to use them for his own symbolic purpose.
- b) This was within John's technique as he has a fondness for both merging and transmuting his symbols for his own purpose. So, for example:
 - i) He amalgamates the cherubim, seraphim, ophanin, and the watchers to produce his living creature hybrids.
 - ii) He unifies the holy of holies and the holy place to fabricate the heavenly sanctuary.

⁸ There are also various other references to angels bringing incense before God, see above under 'Golden Bowls of Incense' [pp. 62].

⁹ See Bruce (1985) pp. 399-402. The overwhelming New Testament symbolic usage of the Old Testament sacrificial system is that of Christ as an atoning sacrifice (Rom. 3:25; Eph. 5:2; Heb. 9:26; 10:10-14; 1Jn. 2:2; 4:10). However in Revelation, John's main focus is to associate the slaughtered Lamb, not with an altar, but with the throne of God.

¹⁰ It is also used once to refer to the altar of incense in the earthly temple. See Bauckham (1993) pg. 269.

¹¹ Most recently Bauckham (2001) [pp. 260-261] who argues that Rev. 8:3-5; 9:13; 14:18 refer to the altar of incense while Rev. 6:9; 16:7 refer to the altar of burnt offering. See Charles (1920) 1 pp. 226-231 who argued against the position of two altars.

- iii) The new heaven and new earth become a unity that is fused by the descent of the holy city, while the New Jerusalem, Paradise, and the throne-room combine to form the eternal Garden-city.
- iv) We will argue later that he combines the sea of glass and the seven torches to generate the sea of glass mixed with fire, which then is transformed into the river flowing from the throne.
- c) Although there were differences between the two altars, during the religious ceremony they did function at the *same* time. So an incense offering was proffered every morning and evening at the times of the regular daily burnt offering (cf. Exod. 30:7-9; Luke 1:9-10). Thus in this respect they did merge temporally. Also both would have been seen in the context of prayer as this was the time when the people gathered in the temple courts to pray.

To continue our argument we now need to turn to the first reference to the altar in Revelation. It first comes into view after the opening of the fifth seal (Rev. 6:9). Here it is portrayed as a temporary shelter for the souls of the martyred saints. From here they cry in an united loud voice to the Sovereign Lord to ask how long it will be before their shed blood is avenged. The response to their plea is that they receive a white robe, they are told to rest, and that the process of martyrdom has not yet finished running its course.

What was the Jewish background to this scene? The first martyr in the Jewish Scriptures was Abel. In Gen. 4:10 he is murdered by Cain. The last martyr was Zechariah who was stoned to death in the court of the house of the LORD (2Chron. 24:20-22). They were used by Jesus (Mat. 23:35; cf. Lk. 11:51) to represent all of God's witnesses and spokesmen who had been martyred in the past, and also to give a warning of retribution within the generation.

John now adopts and develops this depiction to give it an eschatological dimension. The call for vengeance in both Old Testament accounts is explicit. In Gen. 4:10 Abel's blood cries from the ground (cf. Job 16:18; 1En. 47:1). Zechariah, in his death throes, calls for the LORD to witness his death and avenge it (2Chron. 24:22). So too do the saints cry out for the Lord to avenge (Rev. 6:10). As Zechariah (final in the line of martyrs) was martyred between the inner part of the Jewish temple sanctuary [ναός] and the altar of burnt offering (Mat. 23:35), so this also would be the position of the saints, spatially, in Revelation under the combined altar - so John is starting from this OT point of reference and continuing from it. Finally it should be noted that the altar had also functioned in the past - as it does here - as a place of refuge (Exod. 21:14).

This plea of the martyrs is then developed in Rev. 8:3-5 to include the prayers of all the saints which are offered acceptably to God with a great quantity of incense by an angel on the altar. In these verses we now discover the ambivalent character of this symbol, the heavenly altar. With the very same censer, whose contents were offered up as a sweet savour to God, the angel fills it with fire and throws it earthwards.¹²

There is a clear allusion here to Ezek. 10:2-7 where the man clothed in linen takes burning coals from among the wheelwork underneath the cherubim, in order to scatter them over the city.¹³

This association of the altar with judgment continues in the rest of the references to it. In Rev. 9:13 a voice from it commands the release of the four angels bound at the Euphrates who wreak havoc on humanity. An angel with authority over fire emerges from it in Rev. 14:18, ordering the angel with the sickle to reap a grim harvest. In Rev. 16:7 the altar commends the Lord God the Almighty's judgments, as true and just. We will consider later the role of the altar more closely in this respect, but for just now our concern is the reason for its omission from the inaugural vision.

¹² Cf. Ps. 11:6.

¹³ Cf. Charles (1920) 1 [pg. 229] sees a link here with the altar in Isa. 6:6.

4. Reasons for its Omission.

We would have to disagree with I. T. Beckwith when he advocates that it is not 'necessary to inquire whether the altar was in the outset represented in God's throne-room in chapt. 4 (another difficulty raised by criticism).'¹⁴ For John's portrayal of the throne-room in the inaugural vision and more particularly for his message behind that depiction, it was necessary for the altar to be missing from the scene.

Firstly, it is absent from both chapters because John uses the altar as an initiator and proclaimer of judgment. This aspect has no place in his vision at this stage. The role of the altar within the throne-room only comes into view when the judgments and rewards process has commenced in Rev. 6:1ff..

Secondly, the altar was associated with access or reconciliation with God, whether it were the sacrifices, or the communication to God with the incense. With John's emphasis on the transcendence of God in chapter 4 this would be a misplaced notion. In chapter 5 there is reference to the golden bowls of incense, but there is no mention of it being used. It is merely another of these latent symbols which will be made manifest in Rev. 8:3-4.

Thirdly, John wants to eliminate any possibility of his readers or hearers associating the Lamb and the altar in their minds. Rather, one of the main endeavours of chapter 5 is to reinforce the slaughtered Lamb's indissoluble link with the throne. This is a keynote to which John returns frequently throughout the book (Rev. 5:6,7,13; 6:16; 7:9-10,17; 22:1,3). 'Lamb' is the only designation John uses for Christ in the context of the throne.

Finally, we learn in Rev. 8:3 that the position of the altar is 'in front of the throne' (Rev. 9:13 'in front of God') which is a very special one. In his inaugural vision (Rev. 4:5-6), this location is reserved solely, and for a definite purpose as we will discover later, for the sea of glass and the seven flaming torches.

C. Passive Involvement of the Seer.

1. OT Background.

In earlier discussions we noted that the concept of actual ascent appeared on the surface to be absent from Old Testament throne visions, but there were a few veiled suggestions to this notion. However the two main faculties which the seer used were those of sight and hearing. As the vision progressed he could see the action and hear the conversations. Thus on this level their experience was largely a rather passive affair. This is certainly true of the earliest visions, and even the later visions where more action was involved, it was still mainly of a reactive nature. In Isaiah's vision, he admits his utter sinfulness but it is in response to the overwhelming holiness of his surroundings (Isa. 6:1-5). He volunteers for his mission, but it is at the behest of the Lord (Isa. 6:8). Finally he does ask the question, 'How long, O Lord!' and even here it is born out of a sense of frustration (Isa. 6:11). Ezekiel's vision (Ezek. 1) for the main part involves seeing and hearing what is going on in the throne-vision. When God speaks to him, a spirit must enter him before he hears what is being said to him (Ezek. 2:2). The communication is completely one-sided until much later on when the focus is no longer on the throne, but rather on the mundane, and it is only then that the prophet speaks. Lastly, Daniel's vision of the throne scene appears only to have the visual dimension, until the interesting sequence where he *approaches* one of the heavenly attendants [קרבת עלי-חד מן-קאמיא] during his vision experience, and appears also to initiate the conversation with him (Dan. 7:16ff).

¹⁴ Beckwith (1919) pg. 524.

2. Extra-biblical Works.

In the Book of Watchers we begin to discover much more active participation by the seer.

G.W.E. Nickelsburg,¹⁵ notes this observation by highlighting the verbs in the following phrases: "I went in" to heaven (1En. 14:9); "I drew near to a wall" (ibid.); "I went into the tongues of fire" (1En. 14:10); "I drew near to a great house" (ibid); and "I went into that house"(1En. 14:13).

We see a comparable situation in the Apocalypse of Zephaniah where 'he walks with the angel of the Lord' (ApZeph 4:1); 'he went with the angel' (ApZeph 5:1); and 'he turned back and walked' (ApZeph 6:1). In a similar vein Abraham plays an active part in his ascent by reciting a song (ApAbr. 18:1), while in the later Apocalypse of Sedrach, the seer can actually put a complaint against God (ApSdr 3:2). It should probably be noted that the seers' roles are still relatively passive, but there is certainly a degree of independent activity involved.¹⁶

a. Interview Technique.

The interview technique was a very common motif and it demonstrated a greater degree of participation by the seer during his heavenly experience. It is found at an early stage.¹⁷ Thus, for example, Enoch in 1En. 21:4-5, questions his *angelus interpres*. This literary method of 'question and answer,' employed to convey information to the reader, can be between the seer and an angel¹⁸ or some other heavenly being,¹⁹ or it can be a two-way communication between the seer and God himself.²⁰

b. Transformation and Participation.

Another rather common feature was the seer's involvement in praise through the medium of song after his transformation into angelic form. This could be as part of the ascent process (ApAbr. 17:6ff.; AscIsa. 7:37; 8:13,17,22), or it could be his participation in the corporate throne-room worship (1En. 71:11; ApZeph. 8:4; AscIsa. 9:28ff.; cf. Tisac. 6:5; LLAE 26:1;28:1; *Steles Seth*.125, 23-126,16; *Allogenes* 58. 35-38; *Ap. Jas.* 15.22-23). In the *hekhalot* literature the initial motivation for, and culmination of the ascent for the *yored merkavah* was mainly his participation in the heavenly liturgy (3En. 1:12; *Hek. Rab.* §106; §236; §251).

3. John's Experience in Revelation.

John's experience would appear to be passivity personified. At the outset of his vision he sees an opened door in heaven and hears a voice of invitation. It is these two sensory reactions that typify his overwhelming response to his environment throughout. Thus, John's experience follows closely the tradition of the Old Testament seers in that it is essentially passive or reactive. So when he does act as the recorder of a message (Rev. 14:13; 19:9; 21:5), it is on the instruction of a voice from heaven, an angel, and the One who was seated on the throne, respectively. He speaks to an elder, but it is in reaction to the elder's question (Rev. 7:13-14).²¹ He went to an angel, took the little scroll, and ate it, but this is the acknowledgement of a command from the voice from heaven (Rev. 10:8-10). In Rev.11:1, he is given a measuring rod and instructed to measure the temple. On the occasions when he appears to take the initiative he is always immediately commanded to refrain. So he wept bitterly, but he is told to cease (Rev. 5:4-5), he is about to write, but is

¹⁵ Nickelsburg (1981) pg. 580.

¹⁶ In the later *hekhalot* literature this sense of activity and participation was more frequent.

¹⁷ In fact this technique goes back to Zech. 1-4 as a visionary form.

¹⁸ ApZeph [B] 4:55ff.; AscIsa. 7:11ff.; ApAbr. 16:1ff.; TLevi. 2:9; 3Bar. 2:4ff.; ApPaul. 11ff.; *Zost.* 7.27; *Apoc. Paul* 19.26ff.; *GedMos.* 8ff.; *MystJn.* Fol. 2a.

¹⁹ *LadJac.* 1:8; *TAbr.* [A] 11:8ff.; *Apoc. Paul* 22.19ff; 23:1ff.

²⁰ ApAbr. 19:1ff.; LLAE 27:1; *GrApEzra.* 1:9ff.; ApSedr. 3:1ff.

²¹ This is the nearest that John comes to using the question and answer technique. However, even then, it is the elder who asks and then answers his own question.

cautioned to stop (Rev. 10:4), and twice he fell down at the feet of an angel, but he is seriously rebuked for his actions (Rev. 19:10; 22:8).²² Perhaps the only exception to this notion of John having a purely passive or reactionary role is to be found in his re-commissioning scene (Rev. 10:8-11). Here he is simply instructed to take the scroll, but when he approaches the angel, John takes the initiative by asking the angel to give him the little scroll. However his response is still within the context of the overall command from the voice from heaven.

Finally, as we noted above, although it was possible for John to speak within the heavenly environment, there is no indication whatsoever of John actually participating in the worship of God and the Lamb which took place around the throne.²³

4. The Reasons for his Passive Role.

As we have seen above, John seems to go to great lengths to emphasise his lack of participation. There is a deliberate effort to stress his essentially passive role. His ascent was a very uncomplicated affair and his throne-room experience, as far as he was concerned as an individual, was a very detached affair. There was no concept of any experiential gratification. This is seen in the fact that there is no notion of his personal transformation nor his participation in the heavenly worship.

John's method of recounting his visions to his audience is very much one of moving the focus away from himself as an individual. Thus he reports his experience almost as a detached narrator who is outwith the actual experience. He is a seer *extraordinaire*, but it is his message that is far more important. This is the reason why John does not use the interview technique. The absolute necessity for the complete subject matter of his vision to be delivered means it could not be seen to be dependent on the natural inquisitiveness of the seer. Rather, the information was conveyed by a series of authoritative voices, be it from an ethereal source, angels, elders, the altar, the throne, or even finally by the One seated on the throne. He acts as a simple reporter of what he has seen and heard and it is that which has far-reaching significance and consequences.

In the context of the final vision, John's non-participation emphasised its eschatological and eternal dimension. He can only view it for now through his 'prophetic eye and ear.' It is only from a distance on a great high mountain to which he is transported 'in the spirit' (Rev. 21:10) that he can view the city. He does not, as it were, walk its street of gold. John measured the *earthly* temple with a rod like a staff (Rev. 11:1). However it is an angel who performs this task with a 'measuring rod of gold' in respect to the *heavenly* temple (Rev. 21:15). The angel also finds it necessary to explain the measurement was 'by human measurement' (Rev. 21:17). Thus again emphasising the eschatological element as it is the heavenly measurement which was important. Perhaps there is another reason for John's non-participation - his ultimate focus was always on the final vision. This is the final reality which the righteous of his audience will one day experience. The inaugural vision is a reality for their present and especially in the context of its superiority over the Roman empire. However it is a scene which they will never experience, thus John gives no hint of himself being involved in it because no human will be. Rather, it is the final Garden-city which will be their portion and experience of heaven. But again, because it is necessary to emphasise that this is a future hope, he also cannot participate in its proceedings.

²² For a comprehensive coverage of the topic concerning the refusal by an angel to receive worship as an apocalyptic tradition, see Bauckham (1993) [pp. 120-149]; and Stuckenbruck (1995) [pp. 75-103].

²³ This is *contra* Piper (1951) [pp. 10-11] who wrongly suggests that 'a recurrent feature of the Apocalypse of John is the fact that the Seer and other believers are depicted as partaking, together with the angels, in a joint cultus in heaven.'

D. The Fire Motif.

1. Introduction.

In the Hebrew Bible, fire was often used as one of the characteristics of the presence of a theophany,²⁴ especially in the Sinai experiences²⁵ and the later desert wanderings.²⁶ There was also the use of fire from heaven as an instrument of judgment on the wicked.²⁷ This was used in later apocalyptic works, where the agent of fire was considered to be one of the main infernal punishments inflicted on the unrighteous dead.²⁸ This could take the form of fire generally,²⁹ and also the form of fiery rivers, angels, thrones and implements of punishment.

The fire motif was also used in the heavenly realm within the throne-room scene itself. So, in three of the main Old Testament scenes - Ezekiel 1 & 10 and Daniel 7 - fire plays a prominent role.³⁰ In the later apocalyptic works and associated literature, the fire motif was also employed extensively. God's appearance could be that of fire.³¹ He could be seated on a fiery throne,³² with fiery wheels³³ and with a fiery river³⁴ or rivers³⁵ flowing from it. There are also fiery throne-room attendants. These could be a general host of beings,³⁶ or more particularly, fiery angels³⁷ and living creatures,³⁸ both of which could have fiery breath.³⁹ The seminal source for this whole development of fiery ministering beings is most probably Ps. 104: 4 where God is said to make the wind his messengers and fire and flame his ministers (cf. Heb. 1:7).⁴⁰ Some throne scenes stand out in particular because they are depicted as spectacular blazing environments. The scenes in the Book of Watchers (1En. 14), 1 Enoch (1En. 71), the Apocalypse of Abraham (ApAbr. 17-19),⁴¹ and the Questions of Ezra (QEzra (A) 25-30) would certainly fit into this category.⁴² With this background in mind, we will now turn to Revelation and find some striking differences.

²⁴ Gen. 15:17; Exod. 3:2; 2Sam. 22:13; Pss. 18:12; 29:7.

²⁵ Exod. 19:18; 24:17; Deut. 4:11ff.; 5:4ff.; 9:3ff.

²⁶ The guiding 'pillar of fire' is frequently referred to, for example, Exod. 13:21,22; 14:24; 40:38; Num. 14:14; Neh. 9:12,19.

²⁷ Gen. 19:24; Exod. 9:23; Lev. 10:2; Num. 11:1; 16:35; 2Kgs. 1:14; Pss. 11:6; 21:9; Isa. 30:33; 66:15; Joel 2:3.

²⁸ See Himmelfarb (1983), particularly pp. 106-126.

²⁹ HebVis. V 3 refers to nine different kinds of fires which are found in Hell.

³⁰ In the other main throne scene witnessed by Isaiah fire plays a lesser role. However there is still smoke (perhaps incense?) and the live coal from the altar. Also 'seraph' would probably have been associated with שָׂרָף 'to burn'.

³¹ Ezek. 1:27; LadJac. 1:4; 2:17; ApAbr. 17:11,15; LLAE 25:3; 29:5; 2En. [J] 22:1; ApSedr. 2:5; QuEzra [A] 26. *Hek.Rab.* §159.

³² Dan. 7:9; LadJac. 2:7; ApAbr. 18:3,13; 19:1; TAb. [A] 12:4; GBart Fol. 3a; 6a; Fal. Pray. 8,11,19.

³³ Dan. 7:9; 1En. 14:18; 4Q405 20-22 ii 3; LLAE 25:3; ApAbr. 18:12; ApMary [6] 5th bk; GedMos. 7.

³⁴ Dan. 7:10; SibOr. 2.196-7; 4Q405 15-16 ii 2; ApPet. 6; GBart. Fol.18a; EncJnBapt. Fol.13a-b; *Exc. Thoe* 38:1; *SwordMos* [B]; HebVis. II 5 (this river is formed from the perspiration of the holy Creatures); *Hek.Rab.* §185.

³⁵ 1En. 14:19; 4Q405 20-22 ii 10; 4Q286 1 ii 2; QuEzra. [A] 17; 3En. 33:4; *Ma'aseh Merk.* §546; Cf. 1En. 71:2, Enoch see 'two streams of fire.'

³⁶ 4Q403 1 ii 6,9; 4Q405 20-22 ii 10; 4Ezra. 8:22; 2Bar. 21:6; QuEzra. [A] 27; GedMos. 11.

³⁷ ApAbr. 19:6; TAb. 12:14; *Hyp. Arch.* 95.10; GedMos. 3, 19; *Ma'aseh Merk.* §545-46; Fal. Pray. 5, 13.

³⁸ 4Q385 fg. 4 12; AbrAbr. 18:3; *OnOrgWld* 121.8-9; Cf. 1En. 14:11 'fiery Cherubim'; and *Ma'aseh Merk.* § 590 'seraphim of flame'.

³⁹ HebVis. II 7, 9; *b. Hag* 13b.

⁴⁰ See *Gen. R.* 1 and also *Exod. R.* 15:6 for rabbinic discussion of this verse. Here they speculate that each day the angels return to the river of fire for restoration and renewal. cf. *b. Hag.* 14a. See Olyan (1993) especially pg. 29 nt. 56; pg. 71 nt. 4. See, also, Hendel (1985) [pg. 674] who argues from Gen. 3:24 that 'the "flame" is an animated divine being, a member of Yahweh's divine host, similar to the cherubim, the "whirling sword" is its appropriate weapon, ever-moving, like the flame itself.'

⁴¹ This particular scene is most probably influenced by the fiery theophany of Gen 15:17.

⁴² Cf. GedMos. 13; Fal. Pray. 8, 10.

2. The Fire Motif in Revelation.

In the Apocalypse generally, fire can be the agent of punishment, both on the unrighteous of the world⁴³ and in the final judgment of the lake of fire.⁴⁴ It is also used to describe the eyes of Christ (Rev. 1:14; 2:18; 19:12) and the legs of the mighty angel (Rev. 10:1). There is also an angel with the power over fire (Rev. 14:18), but no fiery heavenly beings are mentioned.

As we turn to John's inaugural throne-scene in particular, we find that it is not totally devoid of the fire motif. However, it is certainly very focused and specifically limited to the seven flaming torches before the throne, which represent the seven spirits of God (Rev. 4:5).⁴⁵ There is no inkling at all of God being of fiery appearance. There is neither a fiery throne, wheels, river, nor are any of the heavenly attendants ablaze. We discussed earlier that the sound and light effects from the throne of God (Rev. 4:5) were characteristic of a theophany. However it is noteworthy, that one of the main features of such an experience, i.e. fire, is missing from this scene and also from the expanded lists throughout the book. We will return to the reason for this a little later after we consider two more deficiencies from the throne-room.

E. Fear.

1. Introduction.

The next issue for our consideration is the concept of fear. Heavenly visitations or communications were a common cause of fear to the earthbound participants.⁴⁶ These experiences were often accompanied with the comforting commendation, 'Do not fear.'⁴⁷ In the heavenly realm, fear and even downright terror were also very common features. These emotions were found in the pages of apocalyptic writings and associated literature. The heavenly beings can be portrayed as showing fear.⁴⁸ However, for our purposes, more importantly the seer also frequently experienced fear. He could be fearful simply of his surroundings,⁴⁹ or the heavenly beings,⁵⁰ but often, it was the sight⁵¹ or the voice⁵² of God that was the reason for his anxiety. As with the earthly confrontation, there are again the reassuring words, (or their equivalent), 'Do not fear.'⁵³ This motif is particularly prominent in the Apocalypse of Abraham. In his preparation for his ascent, he is constantly being encouraged 'not to fear', or positively 'to be bold' (ApAbr. 9:1-16:1). Even on the periphery of the divine throne, he feels weakened and his spirit is departing him. However, he is exhorted, one last time not to fear (ApAbr.16:2) and, for the rest of his throne-room vision, he does follow this advice.

⁴³ Rev. 8:5,7,8; 9:18; 11:5; 14:10; 16:8; 17:16; 18:8; 20:9.

⁴⁴ Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14,15; 21:8.

⁴⁵ Interestingly, we also find that within the Nag Hammadi texts that there is very little, if any, focus on the fire motif in the ascent narratives and throne-room scenes found in these Gnostic writings.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Gen. 15:12; 28:17; Judg. 6:22; Dan. 4:5; Tob. 12:16; Lk. 1:12; 2:9; EzekTrag. 82; ApAbr. 10:2; Ap. John 20,20-21,2.

⁴⁷ Judg. 6:23; Tob. 12:17; Lk. 1:13; Cf. Gen. 15:1; 26:24; Lk. 1:30; 2:10; Acts 18:9. See, Stuckenbruck (1995) [pp. 86-92, 275-283] for more references and a discussion of this motif in the context of the prohibition of angel worship.

⁴⁸ Ps. 89:7; LadJac. 2:15; 4Ezra 8:21; TLevi. 3:9; 3Bar. 13:1; TAbr. [A] 16:3,5; HebVis. II 4; 3En. 19:6; Hek. Rab. §168, §187; MystJn. Fol. 2a; SwordMos. [B]; ApocGorg. pg. 84; Te' Ezaza Sanbat pg. 11.

⁴⁹ 1En. 14:9,13,14; TAbr. [A] 11:4; 12:4; Hek. Rab. §153.

⁵⁰ TIsaac. 5:4; 2En. 20:2; 21:2-4; ApZeph. B:3; 4:4,9; 6:9; ApZos. V; HebVis. II.9; GedMos. 21; 3En. 1:7-8.

⁵¹ 1En. 14:23; 60:3; LadJac. 1:6; ApZeph. 6:6; LLAe 26:1; 2En. 22:1. In Hek.Rab. §102 it is the garment of God which is the cause of concern, being described as, 'measure of holiness, measure of might, frightful measure, terrible measure, measure of trembling, measure of shaking, measure of terror, measure of vibration, [that emanates] from the garment.'

⁵² LadJac. 2:1; AscIsa. 9:1-2.

⁵³ So, for example, 1En. 15:1; ApZeph. 4:9; 2En. 20:2; 21:3; 22:5; TAbr. [B] 9:4; TJacob. 2:4; 3Bar. [S] 8:5; ApPaul. 14; Ged Mos. 21; Te' Ezaza Sanbat pg. 11.

2. John's Experience.

Initially, while still on earth, John felt afraid in the presence of the risen Christ (Rev. 1:17). However he receives the standard encouragement, as Christ instructs him not to be afraid and with this, John remains in a fearless mental state for the remainder of the revelations to him. In fact there is no sensation of trepidation from any aspect of the throne-room experience.⁵⁴ The only feeling which is recorded of the seer is that of sorrow (Rev. 5:4).⁵⁵ This lack of fear is also a trait which is common to every canonical throne-vision, except for Daniel's (Dan. 7:15,28).⁵⁶ Before we consider the significance of John's experience we shall explore the related motif of hostility shown within the throne-room.

F. Hostility and Potential for Harm.

Another subject, closely related to the topic of fear, is that of hostility shown towards the seer which had the potential to cause him harm. This is clearly seen in the later Jewish mystic and rabbinic literature. There is angelic intervention. On a lesser level, there are angels who question the right of the seer to be in the heavenly realms. So, for example, Rabbi Ishmael has his suitability questioned by the angel of the Presence (*Ma'aseh Merk* §583) and in 3 Enoch these challenges also occur (3En. 2:2; 4:7; 6:2-3). Of more concern are the terrifying angels who guard the gateways of the palaces (*Hek. Rab.* §213-15).⁵⁷ At the hands of these angels the unworthy mystic can face attacks of pieces of iron being thrown at him (*Hek. Rab.* §258) or being hurled in a burning river (*Hek. Zut.* §407). Other dangers are involved in seeing God. The sight of God can be fatal not only for the angels but also the seer (*Hek. Rab.* §159) and even the heavenly praise can lead to the annihilation of the unworthy (*Hek. Rab.* §104). In the famous 'Four who entered Paradise' saga (*b. hag.* 14b), only one of the rabbis, R. Akiba, survives the ordeal unscathed, while elsewhere in the rabbinic writings (*b. Shabb.* 88b-89a) Moses fears fatal attack from the fiery breath of angels.⁵⁸

1. Situation in Earlier Works.

In the Gnostic writings there are also hostile powers within the heavens. In the First Apocalypse of James, the apostle witnesses armed forces (1 *Apoc. Jas.* 27,16-24),⁵⁹ and later he requires instructions to protect himself from celestial tax-collectors (1 *Apoc. Jas.* 33,2ff). In the *Apocalypse of Paul* [V,2], the apostle witnesses souls experiencing angelic resistance and enmity. He himself faces obstruction from an old man, who is presumably the Jewish God, at the entrance to the seventh heaven (*Apoc. Paul* 23, 18-22).⁶⁰

Works closer to the time period of Revelation also contain a few similar passages, however the antagonistic conduct is less severe. In the Ascension of Isaiah the prophet is tackled about the

⁵⁴ This is *contra* Roloff (1993) [pg. 70] who suggests that the theophanic phenomena give 'the impression of that which stirs fright.'

⁵⁵ Cf. *ApPaul.* 14, 33, 36, 37, 40, 42, 43.

⁵⁶ Nickelsburg (1981) [pg. 580] suggests that in biblical throne visions the experience of fear by the seer is the norm, however we would suggest that it was the exception rather than the rule.

⁵⁷ The nearer the mystic approaches the seventh *hekhal*, the greater the danger he has to face. Scholem (1954) [pg. 49] links these gate-keepers with the 'hostile planet-angels' and 'rulers of the cosmos' in Gnosticism.

⁵⁸ In *HebVis.* II.9, a troop of terrible angels surround the throne of glory. They have the capability of scorching Moses with their breath, however they are rendered powerless by the presence of the Almighty.

⁵⁹ These archons are not specifically in conflict with James, but rather with Christ. However, in *Zost.* 4,29-31 the archons are disturbed by the seer's ascent.

⁶⁰ According to Gnostic thought it was possible that an ascending soul, at any stage up to the seventh sphere, could be denied further progress. These lower levels were controlled by subordinate powers. However beyond the seventh sphere, the divine realm was entered and no further opposition was possible (thus the Hermetic tractate, the *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*).

appropriateness of his presence in the seventh heaven (AscIsa. 9:1). The Apocalypse of Zephaniah contains a passage where the seer is confronted by the accuser (ApZeph. 6). The patriarch in the Apocalypse of Abraham (ApAbr. 13:4-6) is challenged by an unclean bird, which is identified as Azazel, the leader of the evil spirits of the wilderness.⁶¹ Earlier in this apocalypse, we are alerted to the hostility of the living creatures when in ApAbr. 10:9 we learn of the angel Iaoel's⁶² duty of restraining 'the threatening attack of the living creatures of the Cherubim.' Then in ApAbr. 18:8, as they finish singing, they look aggressively at each other.⁶³ Iaoel has to change the position of each of their countenances so that their threatening profiles are not visible to each of them, and has to teach them 'the song of peace.'⁶⁴

2. John's Experience in Revelation.

When we turn to the throne-room scenes prior to Revelation we observe that this 'hostility motif' is absent.⁶⁵ This is also the case with those scenes within John's visions which are also totally devoid of any trace of opposition or potential harm to the seer.⁶⁶ However, some commentators have suggested otherwise. Thus Rowland⁶⁷ describes the living creatures as 'terrible creatures.' Halperin suggests that 'there is something fundamentally savage and chaotic about the *hayyot*'⁶⁸ and 'up to the end of chapter 5 [of Revelation] the living creatures seem amicable enough. But their behavior soon becomes disturbing'.⁶⁹ He then points out their involvement in the calling of the four horsemen (Rev. 6) and in the instigation of the seven plagues in Rev. 15-16. This may be the case, but they are operating under the auspices of the Lamb and of God, and their part is only a mere link in a chain of action. Also, their actions, in the implementation of the 'wrath of God,' are never directed towards each other, nor to the seer, but rather towards an unrighteous world and its inhabitants. Later in his discussion, which widens to include both Revelation and the Apocalypse of Abraham, Halperin suggests that the *hayyot*'s 'essential savagery has been only suppressed, not uprooted and Abraham's companion must always be watchful lest it burst forth in a bloody and senseless attack on each other.'⁷⁰ This proposal is possible of the situation in the Apocalypse of Abraham but does not fit well with Revelation. It is true that there is much violence and judgment in the Apocalypse, but it is always vented on, and experienced by, the wicked terrestrial domain. There is no room for any dissent within the throne-room which is totally pervaded by God's absolute sovereignty. As such, it is suggested that within this heavenly environment there exists a completely tranquil ambience.⁷¹

⁶¹ In 1 Enoch Azaz'el appears as the head of the rebel angels (1En. 54:5; 55:4; 69:2; cf. 3En. 4:6; 5:9).

⁶² In 3En. 20 the angel *Hayyiel* is in charge of the living creatures.

⁶³ This puzzling reaction of the living creatures is explained by Box (1918) [pg. 62 nt.13] that 'the underlying idea of this strange representation seems to be that of emulation and rivalry in service'.

⁶⁴ The Gnostic *Treat. Seth.* 54,32-35 refers to trouble and fighting arising around the seraphim and cherubim. This does not necessarily indicate that they are involved with infighting, but they are associated with hostilities.

⁶⁵ See Maier (1963) for an attempt to trace this later motif back to biblical and ANE roots. See, especially pp. 19-22, for a discussion around the potential dangers associated with the Jewish cultic system.

⁶⁶ It should be noted here that Price (1980) [pg. 37] makes an interesting, but rather speculative suggestion that John's New Testament counterpart, Paul in his ascent (2Cor 1-10), encountered a malevolent angel. Thus Paul finds himself caught up to the third heaven, where while 'waxing proud over his enviable position, suddenly finds himself the object of attack by a punishing demon or angel. Paul appeals thrice to the exalted Lord on the heavenly throne before him, who finally declares that Paul must learn his lesson.'

⁶⁷ Rowland (1998) pg. 592.

⁶⁸ Halperin (1980) pg. 113.

⁶⁹ *ibid.* pg. 92.

⁷⁰ *ibid.* pg. 113.

⁷¹ Perhaps it is worth mentioning here that the Jewish cult was obviously important to John as he portrays his visions, however he completely removes any possibility of harm which was found within that system from the heavenly scene. Cf. Num. 18:3; 2Sam. 6:7.

G. The Reasons for John's Omission of Fire, Fear and Hostility.

In some of the visions we have discussed above, the environment would appear to the readers as being far more infernal than heavenly. In fact in some of the scenes that were portrayed it would have been impossible for human life to exist. In others it would have been an existence and no more. Thus with John's throne-vision scenes free of fire, fear and hostility, he depicts an atmosphere that was a very pleasant one. John also wanted to compare and contrast the earthly and heavenly realities. There was a reason for this.

The book of Revelation displays a strong sense of the imminent expectation of the Parousia (Rev. 1:1,3; 3:11; 16:15; 22:7,10,17,20). The scenes from John's prophecy could quite easily become an actual reality to his listeners. John in his role as pastor-teacher again uses this situation as a two-edged sword. To those who needed to be challenged to repent, the earth was a war-zone, full of fire, fear and hostility, a place to be avoided at all costs. Escape was by repentance. To those who needed encouragement in their overwhelming circumstances, heaven, especially in its eternal garden-city condition, was devoid of all these negative aspects, and as such it exhibited a congenial, commodious ambience. This was a place that was well worth the endeavour to become a citizen. Entrance was by continued faithful obedience which John encourages them to persevere in. Even the inaugural throne-vision, with its more austere portrayal of the transcendent God, did not display any of these negative connotations, and as such there was a positive tangibility to which the righteous suffering could relate. Although it was a heavenly scene, it was certainly not a totally alien 'otherworldly' environment. Nevertheless, it still portrayed God in his transcendent sovereignty, albeit in a more temperate light than some other depictions did. However it would have been adequate to spell out the necessary warning to those who were compromising too much with the corrupt Roman system.

VI The Final Throne Vision [Revelation 21-22].

In the inaugural vision, we suggested that the chapter divisions of Revelation 4 and 5 helped somewhat in our comparison (rather than our contrast) of the two main sections. However we recognised that the vision was primarily an integral unit with a progression of thought threading its path through it.¹ This is exactly the same situation we find in the final vision. It can be divided into two principal parts, the vision of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:9-27) and the new Paradise (Rev. 22:1-5).² Here again, we also have the sense of compatibility, because what confronts us is in essence a Garden-city.³ There is also that sense of development within the vision. It is certainly not our intention to make a detailed exegesis of Rev. 21:1-22:5,⁴ but there are a number of pertinent points for our study in respect to the context of the inaugural vision that should be considered. Also our main focus will centre around the second part of this vision - Paradise Renewed. This concluding vision is concerned with the eschatological future after the final judgment of the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11ff). At the conclusion of the inaugural vision (Rev. 5:13) we were afforded a fleeting glimpse of the future and of this final state when all creation was united. Here was a foretaste of the earthly uniting with the heavenly in praise of God and the Lamb although at that stage there was clearly a great impassable gulf between earth and heaven.

A. The Progression Towards the Final Vision.

1. Introductory Issues.

As the church steeples in many of our towns and villages still burst through the skyline heavenward, so too does John's vision constantly point in the direction of his final prospect of empyrean bliss. As one reads through the Apocalypse, this sense of progression is never far away.⁵ We have already considered quite a few examples of this notion of progression. The seven-sealed scroll reappears with more detail in chapter 10.⁶ The theophanic sound and light effects are amplified with each reference throughout the book (Rev. 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18-21). The door in Rev. 4:1 allows access from earth to heaven, the heavenly sanctuary opens in the form of the temple (Rev. 11:19) and the tabernacle (Rev. 15:5), the heavens open to reveal the divine warrior king (Rev. 19:11), and finally the New Jerusalem descends from the new heaven to the new earth inextricably fusing both (Rev. 21:1-2). There is also a progression of the worship scenes. D. Guthrie suggests correctly 'that the main focus in this book is on worship rather than judgment.'⁷ He then proceeds to discuss the various worship scenes: 'Worship in Revelation 4 and 5'; 'The Saints at Worship' (Rev. 7:9-15); 'Another Song of the Twenty-four Elders' (Rev. 11:15-17); 'The 144,000' (Rev. 14:1-5); 'The Song of Moses and the Lamb' (Rev.

¹ This concept of progression in Rev 4 & 5, of course, also reflected what was in store for his audience as they journeyed towards the final vision.

² John would seem to be particularly inspired in his vision here by the final chapters of the prophet Ezekiel. For a discussion of this influence see Lust (1980).

³ Lohmeyer (1953) [pg. 175] suggests that the phrase καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι indicates the start of a new *independent* vision, see also Thompson (1969) pg. 332ff. However it is better to focus on the continuity and see it rather as two complementary sections of the same developing vision.

⁴ For a recent treatment of these chapters, and especially the New Jerusalem in its traditional Jewish background, see Lee (2001).

⁵ Minear (1962) [pg. 25] is correct when he states that 'already in the letters to the seven churches (chs.2,3) the prophet has anticipated the major themes of the concluding chapter.' In fact this is also certainly the case even in John's opening prologue (Rev 1:6) 'and made us a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father' which can be traced through to the final scene.

⁶ The scroll also provides a link back to Rev 1:1 where the chain of revelation is rendered: God > Jesus Christ > angel > John. Thus the scroll is 'given to John by an angel (Rev 10:1-10), who received it from the Lamb, who opened it after receiving it from the hand of the One who sits on the throne. (Rev 5:6-7).' See further Bauckham (1993) pg. 254ff.

⁷ Guthrie (1992) pg. 73.

15:2-4); and lastly 'The Hallelujah Chorus' (Rev. 19:1-10). These all, of course, point to and culminate in the final vision when we read in Rev. 22:3, 'and his servants will worship him.' Thus these worship scenes are like a necklace of diamonds lying on the black velvet cushion which is provided by the series of judgments. In fact, the stark contrast of the dark background only serves to accentuate these sparkling gems which constitute one of the most important links in this book.

There are other components of his vision which will advance towards their ultimate demise, to disappear without trace. However for the moment we need to look more closely at two other features which progress positively: the sea of glass, and the animated altar and throne. We will then consider two further major developments: the shift from the transcendence towards the immanence of the One on the throne, and the Lamb's association with the throne which is an essential part of that immanence.

a. The Sea of Glass Mingled with Fire.

We noted earlier in our discussion of Revelation chapter 4 that this item emerged from a Jewish hieratic background involving ritual washing.⁸ Initially, John, in his use of this motif, employed traditional Jewish themes. However the sea of glass will now be expanded to display Judaeo-Christian connotations, but not before incorporating yet another Old Testament motif. In Rev. 15:2 we learn that the sea is mingled with fire [μεμιγμένην πυρί] and the conquerors of the beast, his image and number, are positioned on the throne-side shore.⁹

i) The New Exodus Motif.

Most commentators propose that John now draws on the narrative of the Israelites' passage through the Sea of Reeds [יַם סוּף] (Exod. 13:17-15:21). In fact in this chapter he alludes antitypically to many features within this Old Testament story and its associated occurrences: 'the plagues, the crossing of the sea, the engulfing of the pursuers, the song of Moses,¹⁰ the giving of the law amid the smoke of Sinai, and the erection of the Tent of Testimony.'¹¹

ii) Interpretation.

The presence of fire in the sea has been variously interpreted as signifying an echo of the fire imagery in Ezekiel,¹² suffering,¹³ the wrath of God,¹⁴ or, most frequently, judgment.¹⁵ However, in the context of the passage it is most probable that the combination of water and the fire¹⁶ speaks of purification and redemption. In the Old Testament, the agent of fire was often a symbol of purification,¹⁷ as it continued to be in the New Testament.¹⁸ However the combination of water and fire is also found in the Hebrew Bible in the context of ceremonial

⁸ See above under 'Sea of Glass - Temple furniture' pg. 52.

⁹ This involves translating ἐπι as 'beside' rather than the common meaning of 'on.' This would appear to make more sense in the context, and John does use ἐπι this way in Rev. 3:20.

¹⁰ See Bauckham (1993) [pp. 296-307] for a comprehensive defence of the song of Exodus 15 being the one referred to here rather than the use of 'a medley of Old Testament phrases with no relation to the song of Moses in Exodus 15.' [pg. 306]

¹¹ Caird (1966) pg. 197.

¹² Ford (1975) pg. 253.

¹³ Ratton (1912) pg. 306.

¹⁴ Beasley-Murray (1974) pg. 235. Sweet (1979) [pg. 239] proposes that "mingled with fire" 'suggests a fiery mixture for the "bowls of wrath."'

¹⁵ Moffat (1951) pg. 300; Ladd (1991) pg. 204; Roloff (1993) pg. 183; Bauckham (1993) pg. 296.

¹⁶ Kiddle (1940) [pg. 300] states that fire in Revelation is always symbolical of God's punishment, but this is incorrect. In Rev. 4:5 this is not the case where it refers to the seven flaming torches before the throne. Also in Rev. 3:18 where it clearly refers to the concept of refining. It is true that in this process there is the effect of 'destroying all that is worthless' (Mat. 3:12; cf. 1Cor. 3:12-15), however this is secondary to the main aim which is to produce the refined product.

¹⁷ Isa. 1:25; 6:6-7; Jer. 6:29; Zech. 13:9; Wisd. 3:5-6; Mal. 3:2; cf. TAb. [A] 12:10, 14; 13:13; TIsaac 8:3.

¹⁸ 1Cor. 3:13; 1Pet. 1:7.

purification.¹⁹ In Numbers 31:22-23, after the battle with the Midianites, Eleazer the priest commands that the commodities which could withstand it, should be purified with fire, while the remainder should be cleansed with water (Num. 31:21-23). In Isaiah 4:4 there is the reference that, 'once the LORD has *washed away* the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a *spirit of burning*.' With this Old Testament background still in mind, we turn to the image of sea of glass mingled with fire in Rev. 15:2. M. Kiddle, in the context of our present chapter, states that in Rev. 4 '...a shining ocean barred all approach. But in that vision there was no mention of Christ. It is not for ever that God is a monarch far removed from men by unnavigable seas; there will arise those who, purified by their Lord's sacrifice and ennobled by their own sufferings, will reach the farther shore, the shore of the Presence.'²⁰

So this transcendent gulf can be bridged by the sacrifice of Christ. In 1 Cor 10:1, with what appears to be a blend of analogy and typology, Paul links Christian baptism with the crossing of the Red Sea, while in Rom. 6:3, he links it with the death of Christ. So, perhaps, it is only a step away for John here to see the colour of the fire as representative of the blood of the Lamb.²¹ However, there is a more probable solution, when one considers the way John often combines and transposes symbols. In Rev. 4:5-6, he juxtaposes the seven flaming torches²² and the sea of glass, and they are the only two articles to be identified as being situated 'in front of the throne.' Thus, it is very possible that a coalescence of these two items produces the sea of glass mingled with fire. In Titus 3:5, God's salvation is seen in association with 'the washing of rebirth' and 'the renewal of the Holy Spirit.' In fact, these last two suggestions may not be mutually exclusive. 1 John 5:8 connects 'the Spirit, the water and the blood,' which refer to the Holy Spirit, the baptism of Christ and his death, in the context of believers who have conquered the world.²³ Nevertheless, the sea is going to make one more nuance-shift when in Rev. 22:1, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, is 'the river of the water of life' which we will argue is a 'crystal-clear' symbol of the Holy Spirit.

b. The Animated Inanimate Motif.

At various junctures in his visions, the seer often uses an ethereal and incorporeal voice to relay information.²⁴ However, the second feature which we will now consider, and which also progresses positively through the book of Revelation is the concept of actual inanimate articles taking possession of animated features, especially that of speech. The two objects of interest to us here are the altar and the throne itself.

i) Background.

Within early Semitic writings, there was a tendency, mostly within a poetical setting, to bring to life inanimate objects in order for them to render homage to their Creator. This can be seen both in a list of various levels of creation being urged to worship their Maker (Ps. 148:3; Azar. 40ff) and also in a single or a few items (gates, trees, mountains and hills) being involved in praise (Pss. 24:7,9; 96:12; 98:8; 1 Chron. 16:33; Isa. 55:12; cf. Isa. 60:18; Lk. 19:40). This practice also continues into later works. The Testament of Abraham [A] 3:3 describes a cypress tree which recites in a human voice an adapted trisagion; there are animated gates in 3 Enoch 1:11;

¹⁹ There is also the sense of testing and refining in Ps. 66:10-12; Isa. 43:2; Mal. 3:2. God's presence was also conveyed by the pillar of fire and the cloud through the desert wanderings which included the crossing of the Sea of Reeds (Exod. 13:21,22; 14:19, 24).

²⁰ *ibid.* pg. 300.

²¹ Cf. Rev. 1:5; 7:14.

²² In Rev. 4:6, these seven torches are identified as the seven spirits of God. And as we discussed earlier in our study, through John's exegesis of the passage in Zech. 4:1-14, the seven spirits should be understood as the divine Spirit.

²³ See Marshall (1988) pp. 230ff.

²⁴ Rev 6:5; 10:4,8; 11:12,15; 12:10; 14:2,13; 16:1; 18:4. The reference in Rev. 6:5 speaks of a voice in the midst of the four living creatures which could have come from the throne. Cf. QuEzra [A] 29-30 which mentions incorporeal seraphim which sing around the throne.

in *Te' Ezaza Sanbat*, the Sabbath worships its Creator; and in *Abba Elijah* all elements of nature, including the sea, trees, mountains, stones, sun, moon, among others, are animated.

ii) The Articulate Throne.

Of more consequence to us here is the tradition of the vocal throne²⁵ which is found in literature both earlier and later than Revelation. Perhaps the rudimentary precursor of this motif is to be found in the Wisdom of Solomon (Wisdom 18:15) where there is reference to God's all-powerful word leaping from his royal throne. The *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* contains important material on this topic. In the first section of the *Song for the Seventh Sabbath*, the whole temple structure erupts into praise (4Q403 1 i 41),²⁶ while in the second section of this song the temple furnishings sing psalms (4Q403 1 ii 13).²⁷ Then the *merkabot* of the inner room continue this theme as they offer praise along with their associated cherubim and ophanim (4Q403 1 ii 15). In the later work *Hekhalot Rabbati*, this motif is embellished even more. The throne is the closest to God of all other beings and can communicate with God directly. Each day, three times, the throne of glory prostrates itself before God and declares, "ZHRRY'L, Lord, God of Israel, be honoured! Magnificent king, sit down upon me, as your burden is dear to me and not heavy....." (*Hek Rab* §99). This hymn of the throne is also the climax of the heavenly praise (*Hek Rab* §162).²⁸ P. Schäfer suggests that 'it is surely not an exaggeration to speak of a distinct theology of the divine throne in *Hekhalot Rabbati*. The importance of the throne obviously was carried so far that it threatened to abolish the distance between God and his throne, so that the danger arose as it were, of substituting, the throne for God himself.'²⁹

iii) The Altar and Throne of the Apocalypse.

The situation encountered in Revelation fits well within this background just highlighted, especially the earlier notions.³⁰ Firstly, Rev. 9:13 refers to 'a voice from the four horns of the golden altar.' This portrays the implicit impression of an articulate altar, however in Rev. 16:7 the text mentions explicitly the altar's response.³¹ Secondly, on three occasions, a voice is heard from the throne (Rev. 16:17; 19:5; 21:3).³² God is the subject of the last two addresses, therefore is not the speaker. Also, immediately after the third address, God himself actually speaks for the first time in the Apocalypse. Some commentators have suggested alternative speakers to the throne itself.³³ However within the context of the book, and the background discussed, it is not outwith the realms of possibility that we are dealing with an actual *vox throni*.

When we follow the development of this animated inanimate motif as it is represented by firstly the altar, and then secondly by the throne, we uncover an interesting progression.

a) The first reference to the altar portrays it as an interim resting place for the souls of the martyred saints, and from underneath it, they cry out to God. Here, it is a place of petition for judgment.³⁴ The next scene in which the altar plays a part (Rev. 8:3-5) again includes the subjects of supplication and retribution. The prayers of all the saints ascend from it in the form of incense smoke, while it is also indirectly involved in judgment when an angel fills a censer with its coals and they are flung to earth. That sets the background for the altar which is now

²⁵ Here we are dealing with the actual throne of God rather than the class of angels known as thrones: Col. 1:16; TLevi. 3:8; 2En. 20:1; Gos. Eg. IV, 57.22.

²⁶ See Allison (1986) for a discussion of this section in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice in connection with the Apocalypse.

²⁷ In ApPaul 29 the towers and the gates of the heavenly city of Christ respond with 'Hallelujah' to David's singing.

²⁸ This is the same hymn which the seer finally recites before the throne of glory (*Hek Rab*. §251).

²⁹ Schäfer (1992) pg. 14.

³⁰ It should be noted that, in keeping with John's custom of developing motifs, he does so again on this occasion. Thus these objects are not only used as a conduit of praise, but also as a source of information and an issuer of instructions.

³¹ There is an interesting passage in 1Kgs. 13:2ff where a man of God addresses the altar using the prophetic introduction, 'O altar, altar, thus says the LORD.' However, in this case what follows are words of condemnation.

³² ApPaul 44, which is clearly dependent on Revelation, also refers to an animated altar, throne and veil.

³³ So for example, Swete (1906) pg. 224; Ladd (1991) pg. 245; Beale (1999) pg. 930; Mounce (1977) pg. 338.

³⁴ The celestial altar is always connected with judgment (Rev. 6:9; 8:3-5; 9:13; 14:18; 16:7). The altar in Rev. 11:1 is not, but this is the altar within the earthly temple.

going to take an active role in the proceedings. As the sixth trumpet is blown, a direct command issues from it to release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates (Rev. 9:13-14). This has the effect of mobilising a fiendish military machine that leaves a catastrophic aftermath on humanity. Unfortunately after this judgment, there is a double reference to the reality that the rest of humanity did not repent (Rev. 9:20,21).

The final reference to the altar is found within the sequence of the judgments of the seven bowls. It occurs just after the third plague (Rev. 16:7) and at a very appropriate time. Just as its very first mention was in the context of martyrdom, this last reference has the same background. The first, saw the call of the souls of the martyred to be avenged. Now this call has been answered, as it were, as retribution is meted out on those responsible for shedding the blood of the saints and prophets. Then the altar responds to confirm that God's judgments are true and just.³⁵ With this assertion the altar bows out of the heavenly scene. However we do not have long to wait for its successor.

b) As the seven bowls sequence of plagues draw to a conclusion, it is anticipated by a communiqué resounding from the temple; a voice from the throne itself proclaims, 'It is done!' (Rev. 16:17). 'The seven plagues have run their course, and man stands on the threshold of eternity.'³⁶ The judgments are nearing their completion, the judgment of the Great White Throne looms, the new heaven and new earth will be ushered in, and the Almighty will give his personal seal of approval by communicating directly. The obvious successor to the altar, to act as guide towards that confirmation is the throne itself.³⁷

There now follows in the book a section which deals with the demise of Babylon (Rev. 17:1-19:4). After its fall, there is a song of vindication to which the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures append their final benediction. Immediately following this, the throne encourages all God's servants to praise him (Rev. 19:5). A great multitude produce a tumultuous response, praising God and announcing the marriage supper of the Lamb. This leads into the conquering Christ's defeat of the antichrist and his hordes. Then after the final judgment, the new creation is made manifest, and for the last time the throne speaks (Rev. 21:3-4); heaven and earth have merged, God will dwell with his people, and all the benefits of such a relationship will be realised. There is no longer any need for intermediaries to communicate, God himself now speaks. His oration includes the phrase 'It is finished' (Rev. 21:6), which reiterates the cry of the throne as the judgments had neared their completions, but this time there is a truly eternal dimension implied.

2. The One on the Throne.

As we have just demonstrated, there are various participants and components within the throne-room scene that appear to reflect a development through the book of Revelation. We now turn our attention to the first of the two main subjects that also show this trend, and this is the One seated on the throne. In chapter III, 'Worship of the Heavenly Sovereign,' we observed that in the first section of the inaugural vision in Rev. 4, there was a great emphasis on the transcendence of God. Thus, he is invisible behind a dazzling resplendence, with a sea of glass and flaming torches in front of the throne which is emitting sound and light effects, while being surrounded by strata of various worshippers. The reason for this was to demonstrate his complete separation from, not only the mundaneness, but also from the wickedness of the world. However, it was noted that even in this first part of John's vision there were imbedded clues that this transcendence would not remain the status quo for ever. This trend continued into the second part of the vision in Rev. 5, and as we shall now discover, this softening of his

³⁵ As the judgment sequence continues through the following two plagues, the fourth and fifth, there is again the double reference that humanity does not repent (Rev. 16:9, 10).

³⁶ Mounce (1984) pg. 303.

³⁷ Most commentators see the voice as that of God, Christ, one of the living creatures, or perhaps an angel. However even although one manuscript does identify the voice as God's, there is nothing in most of the texts to eliminate the throne itself as a possible source of the voice.

transcendence with respect to his worshippers and followers, persists through the book to this final vision. This is achieved by a clear shift towards expressing more of God's immanent characteristics by emphasising his anthropomorphic and anthropopathic features. Thus, we learn that he provides shelter, protection, sustenance and relieves thirst (Rev. 7:15-17; 12:6; 21:6). He can appreciate the perfume of incense, and receives the prayers of the saints (Rev. 8:4). He is described in the role of a father (Rev. 21:7)³⁸ and as such, he demonstrates parental compassion by 'wiping away every tear from their eyes' (Rev. 7:17; 21:4). He dwells among humans (Rev. 21:3). As we noted above, he speaks directly to John (Rev. 21:5) and finally in the context of their worship, his servants will see his face (Rev. 22:3).³⁹

For the moment we will postpone any further discussion specifically on the One seated on the throne in order to consider another subject that highlights this sense of progression which pervades Revelation. This subject, which is integrally related to the shift towards the immanence of the One seated on the throne, concerns the Lamb's association with the throne.

3. The Lamb's Association with the Throne.

In his work to discover the apocalyptic *fons et origo*, Hanson⁴⁰ has suggested that some of the enthronement passages within the Hebrew Bible⁴¹ have used and developed much older mythic and cultic patterns.⁴² These include such themes as threat, combat-victory, theophany of the divine warrior, salvation, procession and victory shout, the temple built, banquet, and the manifestation of the universal reign. As one peruses Revelation, we discover that many of these components are present. It would, perhaps, be a constructive exercise to trace how, for his own idiosyncratic purposes, John uses these various subjects throughout the whole book within both the hymnic and prose sections separately; and how he does this, not only in respect to the Lamb and God, but also for the conquering saints to whom various promises have been made in the seven letters. However our main concern here is a simpler one. It is to address the development found in Revelation only with respect to the actual throne itself and the Lamb.

a. Introduction.

Before we look at the association of the Lamb and the throne in Revelation, we will consider three relevant instances in other literature where an individual is enthroned in heaven. Firstly, in Ezekiel the Tragedian's *Exagoge* Moses is seated on the very throne of God in a dream. The critical point is what level of exultation is bestowed on Moses by his enthronement. He views all creation,⁴³ and as he numbers the stars⁴⁴ they prostrate themselves before him.⁴⁵ All these are privileges reserved for God alone.⁴⁶ Do we have here an earlier depiction of the

³⁸ Rissi (1972) [pg. 7] is incorrect to state that in Revelation God's fatherhood is referred only to Christ. It is true with regard to Rev. 1:6; 2:28; 3:5, 21; 14:1, however in Rev. 21:7 those who overcome are his children [lit. 'my son'] inferring fatherhood.

³⁹ In Moses' conversation with God we learn in Exod. 33:20 that humans were under the penalty of death if they saw the face of God (Exod. 33:11; Deut. 34:10; and Num. 12:8 do refer to Moses speaking to God 'face to face', but in the light of Exod 33:20-23 it is doubtful that these texts meant that Moses saw God's face, but rather that the term is a metaphor for friendship). However, Ps. 17:15 (cf. 4Ezra 7:98) anticipates the NT hope of the righteous to see God's face (Mat. 5:8; 1Cor. 13:12; 1Jn. 3:2). Cf. Rev 6:15 where the wicked cry for the very opposite.

⁴⁰ Hanson (1971); Hanson (1975).

⁴¹ He considers this in his studies of the Hebrew hymn of Exodus 15 and the oracle of Zechariah 12.

⁴² In this context also Millar (1976) in his study of Isaiah 24-27, has identified a recurring pattern including some, or all, of the themes of threat, war, victory and feast.

⁴³ Cf. Ps. 33:13-15; ApAbr. 19:3.

⁴⁴ Cf. Gen. 15:5; Ps. 147:4; Isa. 40:6.

⁴⁵ There is a precursor to this scene in Genesis 37:9. Here the patriarch Joseph witnesses in a dream 'the sun, the moon, and eleven stars' bowing down before him. In Neh. 9:6 we read '...and the hosts of heaven worship [God]'.

⁴⁶ There are similarities to this passage in the much later work of 3 Enoch. In 3En. 10:1 a throne like the throne of glory is made by God for Metatron (here in Moses' vision there is no duplicate throne, rather Moses takes his place on the throne that God vacates). In 3En. 12:3; 13:1; 14:1 God gives him an inscribed kingly crown. In 3En. 14:1-5 'the angels of the sun, ...moon, ...stars and ...constellations 'trembled and shrank back in alarm.'

ascension and deification⁴⁷ of Moses? P. W. van der Horst believes this to be the case. He describes the *Exagoge* as the 'earliest passage containing the idea of an originally human but now divine viceregent or plenipotentiary of God'⁴⁸ and again, 'this scene... certainly implies a deification of Moses.'⁴⁹ This viewpoint does not go unchallenged. I. Gruenwald⁵⁰ writes 'the vision obviously implied the initiation of Moses into the heavenly realms and his nomination to his kingly office. However, it is quite doubtful whether real deification was also implied by it.' He suggests that the enthronement should be considered within a mystical or semi-mystical framework. Furthermore R. Bauckham⁵¹ has suggested, that 'the crux is the relationship between the dream itself and Raguel's interpretation of the dream, between the extravagant exaltation of Moses to the throne of the universe in the dream and the much more modest account of Moses' role in the biblical story which Raguel gives as the meaning.' He points out that Raguel treats the dream as being figurative in nature. The meaning of the dream must be interpreted from that which has been portrayed. 'A feature of the dream's account of Moses' cosmic exultation is thus interpreted as an aspect of Moses' role in the *earthly* history of God's people'.⁵² Therefore Ezekiel 'can place Moses on [the cosmic throne of God] only for the sake of a similitude: as God is in relation to the cosmos, so Moses will be in relation to Israel.'⁵³ Secondly, the Self-Glorification Hymn which is found among the Dead Sea Scrolls contains a reference to an individual being enthroned in heaven. The translation of the text 4Q491 frg. 11 i 5-11 is as follows:⁵⁴

5. perfect ones, a throne of power in the congregation of gods. None of the kings of old were enthroned in it and their nobles did not[...to an] Edomite 6. my glory is not comparable and none is exalted except me and none shall come to me. I am seated in... in heaven and there are none 7. whoI am reckoned with gods and my abode is in the holy congregation. [My] desir[e] is not like flesh; all that is precious to me is in the glory of the 8. holy [habitation. [W]ho is reckoned as booty for me and w[h]o is comparable to me in my glory? Who is h[e... shall return... 9... Who... grieves like me and who.... 10... Who will contain the flow of my lips and who will advise me and be comparable to my judgments? 11....I am with the gods ...my glory is with the sons of the King.

Earlier commentators on this passage assumed that the identity of speaker within this hymn was the archangel Michael. However M. Smith⁵⁵ has made the suggestion that it was a human being who is enthroned in heaven. J. J. Collins has identified this figure with the eschatological high priest,⁵⁶ while E. Eshel suggests an association with this figure and the Teacher of Righteousness.⁵⁷

Thirdly, in the Similitudes of Enoch (1En. 37-71), the Son of Man⁵⁸ sits on *the* throne of glory to judge (1En. 45:3; 55:4; 61:8), and also on throne of *his* glory to judge (1En. 62:2; 69:27,29 cf. 51:3; 62:5). Not only does the Son of Man sit on God's throne but he also receives worship (1En. 48:5; 62:6,9). R. Bauckham comments on these descriptions, saying, 'that in all other portrayal of exalted human and angelic figures there is no question of participation in the unique divine identity: they fall unproblematically outside it. They execute God's will but they do not participate in the divine sovereignty in the way which sitting on the divine throne signifies. They

⁴⁷ It is well known that in later rabbinic Judaism and Samaritan literature the concept of the ascent and deification of Moses flourished. This idea may have stemmed from the *Exagoge* and texts such as Exodus 7:1 'I will make you like God to Pharaoh.'

⁴⁸ Horst in ABD II pg. 709.

⁴⁹ Horst (1983), pg. 25.

⁵⁰ Gruenwald (1980) pg. 129.

⁵¹ Bauckham (1998) pg. 55.

⁵² *ibid.* pg. 55.

⁵³ *ibid.* pg. 57.

⁵⁴ This translation is that of Davila (1999) pp. 474-475.

⁵⁵ Smith (1990) pp. 181-88. So also, Collins (1994) pp. 151-155; Dimant (1994) pp. 157-161.

⁵⁶ Collins (1995) pp. 146-49.

⁵⁷ Eshel (1996) pg. 202.

⁵⁸ Also referred to as the Righteous One, the Messiah, and the Elect One.

do not receive worship, which is often refused or forbidden. The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch is the exception which proves the rule.⁵⁹

On a rather different note M. Smith, while discussing the Self-Glorification Hymn, suggests that, 'In the Enoch books and in the legends about the ascension of Moses we can see that these ideas [i.e. the influence of speculation on deification by ascent towards or into heavens, speculation which may have gone along with some practises that produced extraordinary experiences understood as encounters with gods or angels] have made their way into Judaism. There they were destined to become important, especially in the stories about a teacher of the early first century CE.'⁶⁰

Before we leave this introduction, it is worth mentioning a couple of other points. In the *Exagoge* and in the Similitudes of Enoch, the enthronement was temporary and for a specific purpose. Also in the Self-Glorification Hymn it does not actually refer to God's throne. Finally it is important to consider the contemporary situation in which John found himself. Within the Roman imperial system, the concept of apotheosis was prevalent. This pagan custom of regarding the emperors as gods at first only took place after their deaths. However from the time of Domitian (AD 81-96) this occurred during the lifetime of the emperor.

b. John's Portrayal of Enthronement and the Throne.

E. Lohse⁶¹ is correct in his appraisal when he concludes that it is only when we join the apocalyptic elements of the book with the *Christusbotschaft* that we are in a position to comprehend its message. The opening verse of the Apocalypse describes the book as 'the revelation of Jesus Christ' [ἡ ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ]. The phrase has the capacity to mean the revelation is 'from Jesus' (subjective genitive) or 'concerning Jesus' (objective genitive). G. K. Beale⁶² suggests that in this verse here, and in the other similar genitive phrases throughout the book, 'it is perhaps best to see an intentional ambiguity and therefore a 'general' genitive which includes both subjective and objective aspects.' Although the context of the verse probably favours the subjective genitive, the contents of the book would support the objective genitive, so the compromise of a 'general' genitive has value.

Before we discuss the subject of enthronement it is very important to stress that a major feature of this revelation of Jesus is John's understanding that the Christ is divine. He has not a shadow of doubt in his mind. We are given clear insights into the high Christology that can be anticipated in the Apocalypse, very early on in the book. We saw that the worship given to the Lamb in chapter 5 is clearly equivalent to that given to the One seated on the throne, thus identifying and endorsing the Lamb as divine.⁶³ However this concept was also seen much earlier in the book with the inclusion of Jesus in the Trinitarian greeting (1:4-5).⁶⁴

The key verse in Revelation on the subject of enthronement appears after Christ's final message to the churches and immediately prior to John's ascent into the heavenly throne-room. These words of the risen Christ appear in Rev. 3:21:

'To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.'

This verse involves two totally distinct and yet connected issues which John addresses. The first issue involves the enthronement of the saints. The second issue serves to introduce the subject matter of this section, 'The Lamb's Association with the Throne.' We will leave the former for the present, as we focus on the latter.

⁵⁹ Bauckham (1999) pp. 59-60.

⁶⁰ Smith (1990) pp. 187-188.

⁶¹ Lohse (1988) pp. 321-338.

⁶² Beale (1999) pg. 183. See his discussion here on this subject.

⁶³ See Bauckham (1993) [pp. 118-149] on the importance of this subject of the worship of Jesus.

⁶⁴ Also in this chapter John appears to describe the risen Christ in terms related to the Ancient of Days and also in Christ's statement to John, he describes himself with the divine designation 'the first and the last.'

The New Testament writers generally described Christ's heavenly position as '(sitting) at the right hand of God.'⁶⁵ This was based on their christological exegesis of Ps. 110:1 (cf. Mat. 22:44; Mk. 12:36; Lk. 20:42; Acts 2:34; Heb. 1:13). This depiction also continued in later Christian literature.⁶⁶ But in Revelation, this is not a portrayal that John uses for Christ. The only thing mentioned at the right hand of God is the item which is closely related to the Lamb, that is the scroll (Rev. 5:1,7). Here in Rev. 3:21 we are told that Christ 'sat down [ἐκάθισα] with his Father on his throne.'

This reference in Rev. 3:21 is the first and last time that Christ is described as such in the book. As John moves into the report of his vision, we observed in chapter 5 that the transfer of the scroll to the worthy Lamb, symbolised a divine link between him and the One on the throne. However this scene only represented the investiture of the Lamb, and there was no mention of enthronement. As we move through the book the Lamb is frequently mentioned with respect to the throne. In Rev. 7:17 the Lamb is linked with the throne by the rather unspecific term, 'at the centre' [ἀνὰ μέσον]. Although not exactly the same structure in the Greek, John often has a vagueness in his description of activities around the vicinity of the throne (cf. Rev. 4:6 'the four living creatures'; Rev. 5:6 'the Lamb'; Rev. 6:6 'a voice').⁶⁷ This is the nearest that John comes in his vision sequence to the notion of the Lamb being enthroned on the divine throne. The only person who is specifically described as sitting on the throne is God himself, and four times in the book the Lamb is mentioned in a direct relationship with the One seated on the throne (Rev. 5:13; 6:16; 7:10; 7:15-17).

However in Rev. 22:1,3 the seer makes another highly significant association of the throne with the Lamb. Here there is twice a reference to 'the throne of God and of the Lamb' [ὁ θρόνος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀρνίου].⁶⁸ In our earlier discussion in chapter III, we concluded that the throne of God was a crucial symbol of Jewish monotheism in the Second Temple Period and as such it was the symbol of the sui generis characteristics which belonged only to the divine identity. In these two verses here, we do not have a depiction in terms of 'the One seated on the throne' and 'the Lamb'. There is no mention of the term 'One seated on the throne.' Rather we have a definition that we have not seen before. This is exactly the same throne which was the very first thing that John sees in the inaugural vision - it is the divine throne and as such represents everything that that throne did in the initial vision. But now the symbolism has been extended. It is a single entity, the throne 'of God and the Lamb.' It is as if John has placed a plaque on the side of the throne to announce its ownership. That designation reads, 'the throne of God and the Lamb.' It is the throne of the 'One seated on the throne' who is Sovereign over all, but it is also just as much the throne of the Lamb that was slaughtered. Thus with this delineation we have a portrayal of the inclusion and representation of the Lamb within the very Godhead.

However John has not yet finished his picture. There flows from the throne the life-giving river, clear as crystal, which as we have said, represents the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹ So here the seer is giving his readers a metonymy for the Godhead represented as the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

⁶⁵ Mat. 26:64; Mk. 14:62; 16:19; Lk. 22:69; Acts 5:31; 7:55,56; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1Pet. 3:22.

⁶⁶ ApPet 6; Ep. Apost. 3,19; GBart. Fol. 10a; ApMary [6] 1st, 2nd, 3rd book; Cf. *OnOrgWld*. 150.25; *Exc.Theo*. 62.1.

⁶⁷ These verses use 'ἐν' in the place of 'ἀνὰ', but there is no fundamental difference in meaning.

⁶⁸ It should be mentioned that some critics consider the phrase 'of the Lamb' to be a later insertion. So Aune (1997) [pg. cxxxi], dismissively classifies it as a "Christianizing" addition' without any reason other than to fit his diachronic hypothesis of the composition of Revelation. The apparent problem for some is that in Rev. 22:3-4 the last part of the verse refers to 'his' and 'him' i.e., the 3rd person singular. However see Beale (1999) pg. 1113 for justification.

⁶⁹ We have argued earlier (pp. 87-88) that the 'sea of glass mingled with fire' represented a combination of the 'sea of glass' and 'seven burning torches' which had an uniquely designated position in Rev. 4 - 'in front of the throne.' John now makes one more nuance-shift and from that location flows this life-giving river which corresponds to the Holy Spirit. This fits well with the Jewish tradition of the understanding of the Spirit of God and water. See, most recently, the work of Um (2000) who devotes his thesis to this association in the context of temple Christology in John's Gospel chapter 4. For the connection between the Spirit and water as a life-giving symbol see, most especially, Isa. 44:3; 32:2,15,20; Jn 7:38-39. Cf. Rev. 7:17; 21:6; 22:17.

B. The Heavenly Hope and Home of the Saints [21:1-22:5]

1 Introduction.

The final vision was going to be the eschatological realisation of the aspirations for the saints.⁷⁰ John has given them an insight into the heavenly throne-room of chapters 4 and 5. This was important for their contemporary situation. However John uses it as a starting point to give his audience a progressive picture of what they could look forward to in a future day.

The last great assize is over, the great white throne has accomplished its purpose, and the books have been closed. Now the seer's attention turns from the fate of the unrighteous to the destiny of the blessed. The new heaven and the new earth have come into existence (Rev. 21:1),⁷¹ but they do not remain separate entities for long. With the symbolic earthly sea eliminated, the holy city, the new Jerusalem,⁷² descends from heaven to earth to form an eternal amalgamation (Rev. 21:2). Finally the potential harmony throughout all creation which was heralded at the end of the inaugural vision (Rev. 5:13) is about to reach its fulfilment.

This eternal epoch is the catalyst for the unveiling of a whole sequence of new realisations which will be expressed both positively and negatively. The voice of the throne announces that the dwelling of God is with mortals,⁷³ he will live with them as their God.⁷⁴ The immanence of God with respect to his 'tabernacling presence' is expressed in three different ways in Rev. 21:3. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes (Rev. 21:4).⁷⁵ There is the reversal of the curse when death, mourning, crying and pain will be no more (Rev. 21:4).⁷⁶

The process of renewal⁷⁷ receives divine validation when God finally speaks from the throne. The seer also obtains divine authorisation to transcribe this confirmation (Rev. 21:5). The Alpha and Omega establishes that, 'They have come to pass!' [γέγοναν]. As the beginning is the end, the end is the beginning. In Rev. 21:7 the conquerors are about to come into their inheritance, and they are also to become children of God as part of his family.

A Judicious Admonition.

At first glimpse, Rev. 21:8 with its reference to a group of various evildoers would appear to be an 'eternal anachronism,' certainly in the context of our previous paragraphs. Judgment has been meted out on the wicked, they are no more. Everything is being renewed. However, the seer is not writing a chronicle of advancing future events. His role as a prophet involves not only the hereafter, but also his contemporary situation. Thus in the previous verses, pastorally, he has addressed those who require encouragement, but now he confronts others within his flock as the preacher. It is a warning to those who are wayward or even apostate. Interestingly, in this final vision he lists those who need to heed his pronouncements three times and on each occasion the list reduces. Here there are 'the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars.' Then in Rev. 21:27 there are 'the unclean, those who practice abomination and falsehood.' Lastly in the throne-room

⁷⁰ Our main concern in this section will be to focus on the final part of the vision in Rev. 22:1-5. Thus other than a short overview and the mention of relevant points to the final vision we will not look in any detail at the New Jerusalem. For some recent discussions Beale (1999) pp 1063-1103; Bauckham (1993A) pp. 126-143; Deutsch (1987) pp. 106-126; McKelvey (1969) pp. 167-177.

⁷¹ Cf. Isa. 65:17ff; 66:2; Jub. 1:29; Mat. 24:35; 2Pet. 3:13; 1En. 45:4-5; 72:1; 91:16; 2Bar. 32:6; 57:2. For a discussion on heaven and earth being seen as a single interlocking reality see Minear (1962), especially pp. 25-29 and see also Sasse in *TWNT I*, pp. 678-680.

⁷² Cf. Isa. 52:1ff.

⁷³ Cf. Lev. 26:12; Ezek. 37:27; Zech. 8:8.

⁷⁴ Cf. Ezek. 36:28; 48:35; Heb. 11:16; Mat. 1:23; Jn. 1:14.

⁷⁵ Cf. Isa. 25:8. This is the future reality of the present hope of Rev. 7:17.

⁷⁶ Cf. Isa. 25:7; 4Ezra 8:53-54; 2Bar. 21:22-23; 1Cor. 15:54.

⁷⁷ Cf. Isa. 43:19; 2Cor. 5:16-17; Col. 3:14.

vision⁷⁸ in Rev. 22:3, it is 'the accursed' only.⁷⁹ It is difficult to discern whether or not John means to portray a sense of countdown with these references⁸⁰ - the first group are under threat of the second death, the next are associated with omission from the Lamb's book of life, while the last group face permanent banishment from the garden. However they needed to be viewed under the ominous shadow of the alarming warning of Rev. 22:11. This seemingly deterministic announcement states 'Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right and the holy still be holy.' It needs to be seen in the light of John's contemporary prophetic role. This exhortation is an enclave surrounded by the language of an imminent Parousia: 'for the time is near' (Rev. 22:10); and 'See, I am coming quickly' (Rev. 22:12). It is another challenge for repentance because the eternal is broaching on the temporal, and unless they act swiftly the status quo will become the final reality.⁸¹

2. Paradise Renewed.

a. Introduction.

In this final scene (Rev. 22:1-5), John now combines the New Jerusalem, the earthly Paradise, and God's highest heaven (the throne-room) to produce a multifaceted combination to represent his insight of the final blessed state. This, as with so much of John's work, is an unique feature.⁸² In both Jewish and Christian literature, Paradise⁸³ was usually located in the third heaven.⁸⁴ So, for example, in the later Christian Coptic work the Encomium on John the Baptist by Saint John Chrysostom (EncJnBapt. Fol. 10b-11a) the Apostles ascend through the first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth heavens to the seventh heaven, but they are not allowed to enter, so they retrace their steps to the third heaven which is Paradise (EncJnBapt Fol. 14b). This work is typical of most of the later Christian writings which do not follow John's compact heavenly structure or others which include items in Paradise which have disappeared from John's vision.

The identification of the Garden of Eden with the heavenly sanctuary was an ancient tradition within Judaism. This heavenly Paradise was a conventional image used to refer back to the Garden of Eden and also to anticipate a future idyllic eternal state. Some scholars⁸⁵ suggest correctly that far from being a naïve myth it is a highly symbolic narrative which depicts an archetypal sanctuary. So the God who walked in the garden⁸⁶ subsequently walked in the

⁷⁸ It should be noted that in his epilogue John again refers to an expanded group of 'the dogs, and sorcerers, and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood' who are outside the city (Rev. 22:15).

⁷⁹ This reference also functions to confirm the curse reversal in the context of Paradise renewed.

⁸⁰ Perhaps it is merely an increasingly general reference to the same category which is spelt out once again in Rev. 22:15.

⁸¹ For other positions on this section, see Beale (1999) pp. 1131ff.; Caird (1966) pg. 284. Roloff (1993) [pp. 250-251] suggests that this verse stands in the tradition of the prophetic statements about hardening (cf. Isa. 6:9-10; Ezek. 3:27), so that the preaching of repentance causes the ones rejected by God to persist even more in their rejection of God.

⁸² Some works would appear to combine some of these motifs: 2Bar. 4:1-6 links the New Jerusalem with Paradise; QuEzra [A] 19-21 locates the great throne of the Divinity 'opposite the garden' in the seventh heaven; TDan. 5:12 reads, 'And the saints shall refresh themselves in Eden; the righteous shall rejoice in the New Jerusalem which shall be eternally for the glorification of God'. In HebVis. III 10ff. Paradise has seven compartments; and GBart. Fol. 7a refers to 'the Paradise of the seventh heaven.' In MystJn. [Fol. 7b] the seventh heaven is like Paradise with a great fountain of water...and around it was planted trees which were laden with many kinds of fruit.

⁸³ The heavenly Paradise is given various designations: the Paradise of righteousness (LLAE 25:3; 1En. 32:3); the Paradise of visitation (LLAE 29:1); the Paradise of delight [of God] (JosAsen. 22:14,16); the Paradise of jubilation (ApPaul. 14); the Paradise of joy (MystJn. Fol. 4a; 9b); the Paradise of the life which is celestial (GBart. Fol. 18b); and the Paradise of Eden (ApMary [6] 4th & 5th books).

⁸⁴ 2Cor. 12:2-4; GLAE 37:5; 40:1; ApPaul. 19-20; EncJnBapt. Fol. 10b-11a; Fol. 14b; 2En. 8:1; 2En. [J] 42:3.

⁸⁵ See, Wenham (1994) pp. 399-404; Wenham (1995) pp. 93-102; Barker (1987) pp. 233-245; and Barker (1991) pp. 57-103.

⁸⁶ Gen. 3:8. Cf. Job 22:14; Rev. 3:4.

tabernacle.⁸⁷ The cherubim guarded the east of the garden,⁸⁸ and the temple and tabernacle were entered by the east, while cherubim guarded the inner sanctuary of Solomon's temple.⁸⁹ The tree of life links with the fulness of life being found in the sanctuary which was a basic principle of the sacrificial law and a recurrent theme of the Psalms.⁹⁰ Adam was to 'till and keep the garden.'⁹¹ The only other places within the Pentateuch where these two verbs occur together are in the description of the Levites' duties in guarding and ministering in the sanctuary.⁹² As the Lord made tunics of skin for Adam and Eve and clothed them,⁹³ so too in the ordination of the priests several times there is mention of Moses clothing them in their tunics.⁹⁴ There are also geographical details which are of interest. The river which flows out of Eden to water the garden⁹⁵ is symbolic of life and is mentioned in connection with divine sanctuaries.⁹⁶ The 'good gold' of Havilah⁹⁷ links with the 'pure gold' which covered the most sacred items of the tabernacle furniture.⁹⁸ Furthermore the precious stones⁹⁹ suggest various associations with later Israelite sanctuaries.¹⁰⁰ The description of the tree of 'the knowledge of good and evil' was 'pleasant to the sight, good for food and to be desired to make one wise',¹⁰¹ which appears to echo the description of the law in Ps. 19:8-9. The law was stored in the holy of holies.¹⁰²

b. John's Garden City.

John has already used some of these motifs in his description of the New Jerusalem aspect of his final vision. Thus, there were the precious stones and the walls and the street of pure gold. However he is about to reveal more, as he shifts from the opulent luxuries of life to the bare necessities. Before we look more closely at these commodities it is constructive to consider how the seer uses the Creation stories of Genesis.

Jewish rabbinic activity busied itself with two branches of so-called esoteric thought: 'the work of the divine chariot' [מעשה מרכבה]; and the 'work of the creation of the world' [מעשה בראשית]. The Biblical passages which provided the bases for these speculative interests were Ezekiel 1 and Genesis 1, respectively.¹⁰³ Many of the apocalyptists were also influenced by the latter passage when they related cosmogonical and cosmological details as they journeyed through the heavens. However John's interest is firmly based on the 'second creation story' of Genesis 2. The two accounts of creation have two different emphases. Genesis 1 emphasises the majesty and transcendence of God. The verb [ברא] when used in the context of 'creating' has only God as its subject. This is the verb used frequently in chapter 1. However the second creation account is the work of an artisan, with God, as it were, 'getting his hands dirty.' There is intimacy as he breathed life into his creation (Gen. 2:7).¹⁰⁴ In John's description of creation restored, there is a deliberate omission of all the aspects of creation which are exclusive to the

⁸⁷ Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:14; 2Sam. 7:6-7.

⁸⁸ Gen. 3:24.

⁸⁹ 1Kgs. 6:23-28 cf. Exod. 25:18-22; 26:31; 1Kgs. 6:29.

⁹⁰ Trees were also planted at times where the patriarchs worshipped (Gen. 21:33). Meyers (1976) on the basis of archaeology and its description in Exod. 25:31-35, suggests that the tabernacle menorah was a stylised tree of life.

⁹¹ Gen. 2:15.

⁹² Num. 3:7-8; 8:26; 18:5-6.

⁹³ Gen. 3:21.

⁹⁴ Exod. 28:41; 29:8; 40:14; Lev. 8:13.

⁹⁵ Gen. 2:10.

⁹⁶ Ps. 46:5; Ezek. 47.

⁹⁷ Gen. 2:12.

⁹⁸ Exod. 25:11, 17, 29, 36.

⁹⁹ Gen. 2:12.

¹⁰⁰ Num. 11:7; Exod. 25:7; 28:9-14, 20; 1Chron. 29:2.

¹⁰¹ Gen. 3:6.

¹⁰² Exod. 25:16; Deut. 31:26.

¹⁰³ *m. Hag.* 2.1.

¹⁰⁴ There is also the reference in Gen. 3:8 of the 'sound of the LORD God walking in the garden' which reinforces this idea of the closeness of God.

Genesis 1 account (he uses those only from the Genesis 2 account). These aspects are either not mentioned or mentioned as not being there. So, there is no sea (or sea creatures),¹⁰⁵ sun, moon (or seasons),¹⁰⁶ or night. Here again John highlights the immanence of God.

In his discussion on the two creation accounts, J. Drane observes, 'The first section.... is a hymn in praise of creation, celebrating God's greatness and his concern for every living thing. It takes observable features of the world, and asserts that God is in control of them all..... What follows is quite different. No longer is it reported in the measured language of lofty poetry, but with the directness of an expert story-teller. In a straightforward account, we read of how the man and woman who enjoyed a perfect relationship with God rejected that relationship, and chose instead to be the controllers of their own destiny.'¹⁰⁷ Tragically they became victims of their own choices and their actions led to alienation and death. However through his book, John has been spelling out the process of reconciliation, and there are two more motifs which have echoes of Paradise that John employs: a) the river and b) the tree(s) of life.

a) The river,¹⁰⁸ because of the overall context of this scene, probably has its fountainhead in Gen. 2:9-10, but John has substantially developed it with other Old Testament sources. The most obvious are: the river which flows from the temple in Ezek. 47:1-12; the living waters which flow out from Jerusalem in Zech. 14:8; and the river whose streams make glad the city of God in Ps. 46:4-5. However, as ever he adds his own signature to it. This river of life does not flow out from the city. Its wellspring is the throne 'of God and of the Lamb' and it cascades *into* and through the holy city. As John has metaphorically walked the street of gold he now has to retrace his steps as the living water becomes intrinsically linked with the city's main thoroughfare. Thus the influence of paradise permeates the holy city.

b) The tree(s) of life,¹⁰⁹ - which are now growing in the city and thus as such they complete the blending of the images of the New Jerusalem and Paradise (cf. Rev. 22:19) - clearly refers back to the Garden of Eden. This image is expanded with allusions to Ezek. 47:12, 'On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food... they will bear fresh fruit every month... their leaves are for healing.'

The notion of two trees of life, 'on *either side* of the river is a tree of life,' is intriguing.¹¹⁰ Most commentators argue that this is some kind of collective reference to 'trees' - the singular to be taken as a plural.¹¹¹ However in the context of Revelation John always refers to the singular tree to mean a singular tree: Rev. 2:7 'eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God'; Rev. 22:14 they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city'; Rev. 22:19 'take away his share from the tree of life, and out of the holy city.' Then in our discussion there is in Rev. 22:2 'on this side and on that side of the river a tree of life'; and 'the leaves of the tree'. It is very unlikely that his exegesis has been dominated by the two banks of trees in Ezekiel and he simply acquiesces in its influence - and thereby simply uses a tree of life to represent a general plurality of trees. John usually develops and merges his various sources. So with his references that he is using, it almost seems that he is producing here a mirror image, a shadow as it were. So he is creating a liaison between the heavenly paradise and the earthly paradise. An essence of that original age of innocence remains,¹¹² as the tree of life grows from, is anchored in and

¹⁰⁵ It is interesting that none of the sea creatures is mentioned in the naming ceremony of Gen 2:19-20.

¹⁰⁶ In his description of trees producing fruit he refers to the temporal measurement of twelve months. This is because of John's continual use of the number twelve, but it also demonstrates that there are no seasons.

¹⁰⁷ Drane (1987) pg. 245.

¹⁰⁸ We have already argued for the association of the living water with the Holy Spirit [pg. 87], however John has also drawn on these other OT motifs. In fact, they would all appear to be inter-linked [Um (2001)].

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Rev. 2:7; 22:14, 19.

¹¹⁰ Although the text could be a little ambiguous here, it is certainly possible to discern the notion of some sort of duality of the tree of life. This is a concept which, as far as I am aware, is unique within this context.

¹¹¹ So, Beasley-Murray (1974) pg. 331; Roloff (1993) [pg. 246]; Beale (1999) pg. 1106.

¹¹² Cf. 1Cor. 15:42ff.; Rom. 8:22.

sustained by the earth.¹¹³ In fact John has already done a similar thing earlier when he fuses the new earth and new heaven with the new Jerusalem and as a result God's home is among humankind (Rev. 21:1-3).

It is also significant that the promise of Rev. 2:7 to 'eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God,' after this section (Rev. 22:1-5) becomes in Rev. 22:14 'the right to the tree of life and may enter *the city*' (cf. Rev. 22:19 'take away his share from the tree of life, and out of the *holy city*'). Thus again emphasising blending of these two entities.¹¹⁴

Here, John with his emphasis on the total fusing of these images - which started at the outset of this vision with the new heaven and new earth fused by the descent of the holy city (which was signalled much earlier in the pan-creational chorus of Rev. 5:13) - is highlighting an important truth in the light of heresy and error. The Gnostic-Platonic worldview was not expecting a resurrection at all, but rather some sort of immortality as disembodied souls. However the Church had a strong belief in the resurrection of Christ in his glorious body, and as such he was the precursor of the Christian's final hope (Rom. 8:12-17; 2Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 3:21). Thus some essence of the original creation lingers into the eternal state.

3. The Serving Saints.

Finally, John is going to reveal the situation which exists in close proximity to the throne. The circumstances are completely different to the inaugural vision of chapter 4. Even the mention of the throne is assigned to the final stages of his vision. This contrasts sharply with his initiation to the throne-room when his very first sight was that of the divine throne. Now, around this corporate representation of the Trinity are the saints. Their experience is fourfold: a) they will serve him; b) they will see his face; c) they will have his name on their foreheads; and d) they will reign eternally.

a) His servants will serve him (Rev. 22:3). The redeemed will worshipfully serve (λατρεύουσιν)¹¹⁵ from their position in close proximity to the throne. The subject of their service has been debated because of the use of the third person singular pronoun: 'him' [αὐτόν].¹¹⁶ However from the context of Rev. 22:1 it is probably best to see the saints in the service of the Godhead.

b) They will see his face (Rev. 22:4). This is the culmination of the aspiration of the righteous to see God in his temple (Pss. 11:4,7; 27:4)¹¹⁷ and the eschatological hope of being in God's presence and seeing him face to face (Isa. 52:8; 4Ezra 7:98).¹¹⁸ Thus John here, with other New Testament writers (Mat. 5:8; 1Cor. 13:12; 2Cor. 3:18; 1Jn. 3:2), is picking up on this theme.

c) They will have his name on their foreheads (Rev. 22:4).¹¹⁹ This description emphasises the complete consecration to the service of God,¹²⁰ the intensification of the notion of intimate fellowship,¹²¹ and the concept of totally belonging to God. There is a clear Old Testament echo here of God's name being written on the forehead of the high priest (Exod. 28:36-38; Josephus (*Ant.* 3.187); Philo *Vit. Mos.* 2.114ff.; cf. Num. 6:27).

d) They will reign forever and ever (Rev. 22:5). No mention is made of the subjects over whom the saints will reign because this is not John's purpose. Rather it is the fulfilment of the promise in Rev. 3:21 as they will share in the royalty of the Godhead serving in the kingdom of God.

¹¹³ This is, of course, the very garden where God once had walked (Gen. 3:8). Cf. 4Ezra 8:52 'Paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the age to come is prepared.'

¹¹⁴ For a treatment of immortality and resurrection as complementary or in conflict, see Barr (1992) especially pp. 94-116, and also earlier Lincoln (1981); Cavallin (1974).

¹¹⁵ Sweet (1979) [pg. 312] suggests 'carry out religious duties'. Cf. Isa. 61:6; Rom. 12:1.

¹¹⁶ Beasley-Murray (1974) pg. 332; Beale (1999) pg. 1113.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Pss. 17:15; 42:2.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Isa. 60:2; Zech. 9:14; TZeab 9:8.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Rev. 3:12; 7:2-3; 14:1. *Contra* Rev. 13:17; 14:9,11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4 'the mark of the beast.'

¹²⁰ Swete (1906) pg. 301.

¹²¹ Beale (1999) pg. 1114.

C. Comparison between Inaugural and Final vision.

In this section we will attempt to pull together various threads as we consider this final eschatological throne-room scene - which serves as a summary and culmination of the eternal existence - in the light of the inaugural throne vision that gave John his first experiences of the heavenly realm. In this regard we will review the throne (and its occupant), the furnishings and furniture, and the occupants. In our quest we will particularly reflect on the theological shift from transcendence to immanence.¹²²

In the inaugural throne-room vision, the first sight in heaven is that of the throne - representing cosmic sovereignty - and its Occupant who solely executes his absolute authority. However in the final vision, one has to proceed all the way through the city to the garden to view the throne. The ambience of the two scenes is completely different. There are the sound and light effects emanating from the throne - flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunders - accentuating the power and majesty of its Occupant. The sea of glass and seven torches would serve to deny access to the throne and they are not really conducive to sustaining life. However in this final *pastoral* vision, rather than access being barred to the throne, a river flows from it and not only that, it also contains the very water of life.

In the inaugural vision, there were also various heavenly attendants who gave a sense of the increasing separation and detachment of the One seated on the throne, but in the final vision there is no barrier between the saints and the throne. In fact there is now continuity as the river flows from it. These attendants have served their purpose,¹²³ and in the final vision they have been replaced by the saints who serve God. The living creatures have served their purpose as representatives of the created order. Their function as symbols of the paradisiacal temple¹²⁴ has been realised in the Garden-city, while their contribution to worship has been superseded by the saints. With the twenty-four elders, as representations of the saints, there is a sense of progression through the book. Thus in Rev. 5:8 they have harps, however in Rev. 15:2 (cf. 14:2) these instruments are in the hands of the saints. They also hold golden bowls of incense but in Rev. 8:3-4 it is actually an angel who offers incense in conjunction with the prayers of the saints. The elders are dressed in white robes (Rev. 4:4). Then later we learn that the multitude of the redeemed are robed in white (Rev. 7:9, 13), while at the marriage supper of the Lamb, the bride is 'clothed with fine linen, bright and pure' (Rev. 19:8 cf. 3:4-5, 18). So in the final vision the worship and service will be performed by those they represented, that is the people of God. Two more closely related items - crowns and thrones - which are associated with the twenty-four elders have to be considered.

Crowns and Thrones.

The concept of the righteous being rewarded by receiving a crown can be found in some earlier and contemporary Jewish and Christian literature (Wisd 5:16; 1QS 4.78; 1QH 9.25; 4Ezra 2:46; 2Bar 15:8; Asc Isa. 9:10, 18, 24, 25. cf. *Interp. Know* 21.31-33; GBart fol. 18b). It was also a common notion with some NT writers (1Cor. 9:25; 2Tim. 4:8; Jas. 1:12; 1Pet. 5:4). In Revelation there is the promise of a crown of life (Rev. 2:10)¹²⁵ and a crown for patient endurance (Rev. 3:11).¹²⁶

However more interesting is the related concept of enthronement. Probably the earliest reference to other thrones in the throne-room is found in Dan. 7:9-10 (cf. 4Q530 [4QBook of Giants]^b)

¹²² For the shift towards immanence in Revelation chapter 4, and chapter 5 see earlier pp. 64-66 and pp. 72-73.

¹²³ We have suggested earlier that their combined benediction (Rev. 19:4) just before the marriage supper of the Lamb was their swan song and thus signalled their final demise.

¹²⁴ See earlier page 53.

¹²⁵ For a discussion of the crown of life here see Hemer (1986) pp. 70-77.

¹²⁶ However there is no record of the saints actually receiving these crowns, see below.

22:6). These thrones are most probably for the heavenly council ('the court sat in judgment' Dan. 7:10) and the scene also appears to have taken place on earth (cf. Rev. 20:4).

In the Similitudes of Enoch (1En. 37-71) the Son of Man sits on a throne (including God's) also with the purpose of judging.¹²⁷ The concept of sitting on a throne to judge is also found in the Gospels (Mat. 19:2; cf. Lk. 22:30; cf. Rev. 20:4). Here it is the apostles who perform this task.¹²⁸ In Ezekiel the Tragedian, Moses temporarily sits on God's throne - this passage with its interpretation has to be taken figuratively to represent (by this similitude) Moses' ruling position over Israel.¹²⁹

There also developed the notion of being enthroned in heaven as a reward for the righteous dead.¹³⁰ This was an eschatological hope widely held in both Jewish and Christian circles.

There are references to the throne of the patriarchs and Old Testament worthies (TJob 32:2-3; TAbbr [A] 11:4; TIsaac 2:7; GedMos. 57ff.), the Apostles (GBart. Fol. 18b) and more generally for the righteous dead (1En. 108:12; AscIsa. 9:9-10, 18, 24-25; ApPaul 29 cf.; ApEl 1:8; 4:29).

As we turn to Revelation there is the reference to the enthronement of the conquerors and the Christ¹³¹ in Rev. 3:21. However as we journey through the Apocalypse we search in vain for the enthronement of the saints coming to fruition explicitly (just as there is also no mention of Christ being enthroned). The only reference in the throne-room on this subject is found in Rev. 22:3-5. Here the saints are eternally serving and reigning.¹³² How can these positions be reconciled?

Generally, it is the case that often the promises found in the messages to the seven churches are developed and elucidated in the light of the seer's vision experiences. In our particular case, the key verse is found in the inaugural throne-room vision in Rev. 4:10. Here the twenty-four elders, who are the representatives in this vision of the glorified saints,¹³³ symbolically rise from their thrones and cast their crowns before God's throne. By this dual action they forfeit their regal status linked with crowns and enthronement, and by falling down in worship any sense of ruling that remains must be seen in association with this symbolic action. So as we observe in Rev. 22:3-5 the saints reign eternally but it is in the context of worshipful service of the Trinity. Thus in the light of this final vision, along with the actions of the elders in the inaugural throne vision, Rev. 3:21 must mean for the saints a sharing in God's kingdom, serving under his rule.

A final question needs to be asked: Why does John have such an aversion to the mention of the actual enthronement of any individual, other than the One seated on the throne, throughout his book? For the answer we have to turn to John's background where in both the religious and political world there survived the error summed up by the equation: enthronement = deification. Thus for the Christ, John does not choose actual enthronement to ratify his divinity. There is no concept of the process of the deification of the Lamb. For John, Jesus is divine from the beginning of his book, when he is included in the Trinitarian blessing in Rev. 1:4. For the saints John shies away from any reference to an actual human enthronement to avoid any association with the error of the apotheosis of a human. Therefore, after his reference in Rev. 3:21, John proceeds to expound and clarify his statement through his book.

¹²⁷ See earlier pg 93 for discussion.

¹²⁸ In the context of a meal in Mat. 20:21 (cf. Mk. 10:37) there is a discussion as to who will sit on Christ's right and left in his kingdom. Also in Eph. 2:6 there is the corporate (rather than individual) hope of being seated with Christ in heavenly places, but it does not really incorporate the sense of actual enthronement.

¹²⁹ See earlier pp. 92ff.

¹³⁰ It should be noted here that in 4Q491c (or 4QSelf-Glorification Hymn^b) there is reference to an individual being enthroned during his lifetime, see earlier pp 92ff. Also in ApZeph [A] angels called 'lords' sit on thrones and wear crowns.

¹³¹ See earlier on Christ's enthronement pp. 93ff.

¹³² Cf. 2Tim. 2:12.

¹³³ See earlier pp. 63-64.

In his pilgrimage, John has travelled from the transcendence of the inaugural vision to this final vision where he has emphasised the immanence of the Godhead as far as he possibly could while still retaining the clear dichotomy between the Creator and the created, the human and the divine. Thus in the Garden-city all that finally remains is the throne representing the Godhead, while around it are the saints existing and functioning in this eternal bliss. In John's mind there has never been any conflict between the transcendence of God and his immanence. Rather he merely chooses to emphasise one then the other for his specific exegetical purpose. This mutual coexistence of God's transcendence and his immanence is in accord with John's traditional Jewish background. It is so succinctly and poetically expressed in Isaiah 57:15:

For this is what the high and lofty One says -
 he who lives for ever, whose name is Holy;
 I live in a high and holy place,
 but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit,
 to revive the spirit of the lowly
 and to revive the heart of the contrite.

VII Conclusion.

As we have considered John's inaugural and final throne-room visions - in the context of the trajectory of Jewish and Christian throne-room scenes - we have found that they are set firmly in a Jewish traditional background. His work contains many continuities. It is difficult to ascertain if he explicitly made use of earlier Jewish works outwith the canon, however it is very obvious that he used the Old Testament extensively. In fact, in relation to his sources, he employed the whole domain of this canon of sacred texts, and this is especially true of the prophetic writings. Thus we have sought to confirm that this Jewish traditional background was his overwhelming fountainhead of inspiration rather than, for instance, that of the contemporary Roman imperial court ceremonial or the Graeco-Roman theatre.

John never cites Scripture verbatim. However the throne-room scenes are brimming with allusions to and echoes of the Old Testament. These allusions to a particular pericope can appear frequently throughout his book, adopting fresh nuances at each occurrence. His method in relation to his sources reveals John's idiosyncratic *modus operandi*. Thus, as a prophet, John is not afraid to make various modifications as he weaves his sources to enrich and deepen the fabric of his message. He does this in various ways:

1. He is extremely selective in the material that he chooses to include or not to include. Also, at times, he deliberately omits certain items or themes, and then employs them at a later stage.

a) He is very particular in the use of the canonical throne-vision of Daniel. He omits any significant reference to it in his inaugural and final throne-room visions, but uses it extensively in other sections of his work.

b) He also chooses to omit the altar completely from these visions, but in his progression between the two visions, the altar has an important role to play.

c) He prefers one creation story (Gen. 2) over and above the other (Gen. 1) to establish his particular theological point.

d) He selects his material to counter religious unorthodoxy on the one hand and imperial delusion on the other. So he develops the motif of the tree(s) of life among others, to highlight one heresy, while he is very meticulous in his treatment of enthronement, divinity and reward to avoid another erroneous belief.

2. Within John's technique there is a fondness for both merging and transmuting his sources for his own purpose. So, for example:

a) He amalgamates the cherubim, seraphim, ophannin, and the watchers to produce his living creature hybrids.

b) He unifies the holy of holies and the holy place to fabricate the heavenly sanctuary.

c) The new heaven and earth become a unity that is fused by the descent of the holy city, while the New Jerusalem, paradise, and the throne-room combine to form the eternal Garden-city.

d) He combines the altar of burnt offering with the altar of incense.

e) The slaughtered Lamb is ascribed messianic titles; combines the lamb of Isaiah 53 and the paschal lamb; is given the symbol of latent power; is connected with God's active universal presence; and is uniquely worthy to receive praise ordinarily reserved only for God.

3. Not only does John take sources and develop them, but he also continues this process through the Apocalypse. He constantly elaborates on his symbols and motifs for his purposes.

This is seen in the use of several components associated with the cult. Thus, on every page, there is a sense of progression and development as we read through his book. This can be observed in the various worship scenes; in his treatment of the sea of glass and the seven flaming torches; the twenty-four elders; the animated motif; the theophanic sound and light effects; the Lamb association with the throne; and shift from the emphasis on the transcendence of God to that of his immanence.

The inaugural and the final throne-room visions of Revelation reveal general resemblances and differences. This is also the case when these throne-room scenes are compared with other such scenes. John's ascent is a very simple affair, and his view of heaven is fairly typical of the earlier works. However, unlike the authors of many of the apocalypses, he has little interest in the lower heavens, rather his overwhelming focus is on the throne-room itself. The function of his ascent - that he could communicate God's instructions and purposes - corresponds to many of the other Jewish apocalypses and to that of the Old Testament prophets' experiences.

In line with other visions the temple plays a major role, however almost uniquely John includes a large volume of hymnic compositions. Other factors which would appear to be unparalleled are: his comprehensive use of the traditional accompaniments of a theophany and their development through the book; his use of the sea of glass; and his application of the twenty-four elders. John can accentuate some motifs for his own purpose - like that of the passivity of the seer; his refinement of the Seraph's Song; and the 'new song' motif - while purposefully ignoring others. Thus, for example, John omits the fire, fear, hostility, 'interview technique,' and transformation motifs to further his theological goals, while they are frequently found in other throne visions.

John understood his book to be the climax of Old Testament prophecy. He is the final prophet who is enlightened by the Holy Spirit and controlled by the Christ. His work is the elucidation and culmination of the Old Testament Scriptures for which he has great respect. He is a prophet on two levels, and as such he has a clear purpose for writing his Apocalypse.

1. He is a spokesman for and to the Christian church as he 'forth-tells' its doctrine into his contemporary situation as a preacher and pastor, and all this is executed under the influence of a belief in an imminent Parousia. Exhortation and instruction is John's field of expertise, he is not in the business of apologetics.

2. He is a seer, as he foretells the future. He does this by bringing into focus - through his Christological lens which is illuminated by the Spirit - the eschatological kingdom of God and its subjects.

The objective of his progressive revelation was to use the inaugural vision as a starting point of a journey towards the final vision of the Garden-city. The Trinity introduced in John's doxology (Rev. 1:4-5) - represented by the One seated on the throne, the seven flaming torches and the sea of glass, and the slain Lamb in Rev. 4-5 - is finally symbolised in Rev. 22:1-5 by the throne of God and the Lamb with the river of life flowing from it, and surrounded by the saints who will eternally worship, serve and reign.

Appendix: The Major Throne-room Scenes Consulted.

A. The Old Testament.

1. The vision of Moses and his companions. Exodus 24:9-11.

The majority of recent scholars believe that this passage reflects a very old tradition and that it is probably the earliest testimony to the existence of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel.¹ This short pericope refers to the ascent of the mountain by a deputation of the four leaders, Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders. Here they were given, firstly, a *visio Dei* after which they share in a meal. There are unusual, if not unique, features in this incident. This is the only vision in the Old Testament which is completely silent,² i.e. there is no audition. This is in contrast to the lightning, thunder, trumpet and voice of adjacent passages.³ In fact there is no mention within this tranquil scene of any of those other theophany characteristics within the Sinai traditions - glory, fire, smoke, cloud, and violent shaking.⁴ It was also experienced, not by a solitary individual which was the norm, but rather by a whole crowd of eyewitnesses. Moreover, the God of Israel appeared unaccompanied since there is no mention of any heavenly attendants. This is extremely unusual in the context of the other recorded throne-visions where the Lord was always surrounded by a company of heavenly servants, messengers or worshippers.

2. Micaiah's Vision. 1 Kings 22:19-23.

This section is an enclave within a passage describing the continuation of the Syrian Wars.⁵ The kings of Israel and Judah were poised to attempt the recovery of Ramoth Gilead from the King of Syria. They sought YHWH's blessing on their endeavours. Eventually Micaiah's opinion, as God's mouthpiece, was sought and he disclosed his vision. While the other prophets were *Heilpropheten* (their oracles were always pleasing and agreeable, and so, by implication they were false prophets), Micaiah was depicted as a true "judgment and woe" prophet, and he introduced his vision by way of a prophetic oracle with the words, 'therefore hear the word of the Lord' [לכן שמע דבר יהוה]. The chapter has been described as a "clash between earth's court and heaven's court,"⁶ and it is the latter which is of interest to our studies. The *mise en scène* of the divine court is that of YHWH sitting on his throne flanked on either side by the 'host of heaven' [צבא השמים].⁷ This entourage has various interpretations in the Old Testament. However the meaning here is reasonably straight forward. It is not the stars of heaven as YHWH's military force,⁸ nor the concept of deified heavenly bodies,⁹ rather the thought is that of heavenly beings who are in attendance. The royal imagery is explicit. The

¹ Perlitt (1969) has argued against this position, so following the bulk of 19th century scholarship who proposed that belief in the covenant was a late development. On a different note, Nicholson (1974) [pp. 96-97] sees the passage as an independent and unique theophany tradition where the meal is best understood as meaning that 'those who experienced this remarkable manifestation of God "rejoiced" or "worshipped" in the presence of God,' while Dozemann (1989) [pg. 113] describes it as 'a worship service on the cosmic mountain before the heavenly temple of God.'

² So Davies (1967).

³ Exod. 19:16; 20:18.

⁴ Exod. 19:18; 24:16-18; 33:22; 34:5.

⁵ There is discussion over the nature of this chapter, whether it should be described as a prophetic legend or historical battle account, or as both. Jones (1984) argues that the prophetic tradition cannot be separated from battle narrative, while De Vries (1985) sees the chapters as prophetic material, although coming from two independent sources.

⁶ De Vries (1985) pg. 266.

⁷ This concept was a very ancient tradition as the dating of this passage containing the vision is ca 700 B.C., and it is repeated in the later OT works of Job 1&2; Isa. 6:1; and Dan. 7.

⁸ So in Gen. 2:1; Ps. 33:6; Isa. 34:4; Jer. 33:22 etc.

⁹ 2Kg 21:3,5 records Manasseh introducing this practice from the Assyrians into the cult. In 2Kgs. 23:4ff. we read of Josiah's reforms which terminate this practice.

heavenly scene is depicted as the king's court in session. YHWH as the king, is surrounded by his courtiers and he is seen as controlling human affairs from his heavenly throne. In this capacity a volunteer is called for, but initially no-one ventures forward. However, finally, the spirit [הַרוּחַ]¹⁰ presents himself, is commissioned, and then carries out his task.

3. Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-6.

As we noted earlier, a wide range of dates and a complex developing history of the story have been proposed for the book of Job, extending from the time of Moses to the Hellenistic period.¹¹ Although not a throne-vision as such, this passage gives us some insights into the Hebraic perception of the heavenly scene at this stage. It appears to be an extremely relaxed atmosphere. The dialogue is very informal in keeping with a popular anecdote, and we can feel the sense of casualness as the heavenly council almost saunter into the divine presence. This is in complete contrast to post-exilic thinking and theology. The heavenly audience comprises: (a) 'the sons of God' [בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים] who are variously identified in the Old Testament,¹² but in our context, they are probably best described as 'manifestations of the divine personality, the means of execution of divine decisions, the source of acquisition of knowledge of human affairs. That they are *only* personifications of divine attributes, powers, or dispositions is beyond the competence of any human to tell: but they are that at least.'¹³

(b) 'the Satan' [הַשָּׂטָן] who is permitted to influence circumstances on earth by causing dire consequences in the life of Job and his family. However, he is 'subject to and under the control of Yahweh and incapable of acting beyond the terms of His permission.'¹⁴

4. Isaiah's Vision. Isaiah 6.

This passage has been classified in different ways. So, among many others, N. Habel would describe it as a call-narrative¹⁵ while B. O. Long classes this section, along with Micaiah's vision above (1Kgs. 22:19-22) as a 'dramatic word-vision'.¹⁶ Whatever its classification, this passage introduces us to particular features that have not been seen so far in the previous throne-visions. Now we have a great sense of the transcendence and holiness of God who must be worshipped. There is also a description of the heavenly beings [שְׂרָפִים], hymnic material, and links with the temple. The main message portrayed is a theological one, that is the holiness and transcendence of God. This idea of transcendence is developed with the description of the Lord as 'high & lofty' [רַם וְתָשָׂא] (v.1). However there is a link with earth 'as the hem of his robe filled

¹⁰ The spirit [הַרוּחַ] is identified by De Vries (1985) as 'the spirit of prophetic inspiration, personified,' while Gray (1964) [pg. 452] suggests that "the spirit" is the supernatural, divinely inspired power of prophecy....this was an emanation, or extension, of divine personality, and so may be personified.' Jones (1984) agrees with this later interpretation.

¹¹ Anderson (1976) pg. 61. For our purposes, the heavenly scenes in the prologue fit in far more closely with the previous vision of Micaiah which is dated around 9th-8th century B.C. than with the later passages that we shall investigate.

¹² Later on in the book of Job (Job 38:7) these heavenly beings are compared to stars. In Ps. 97:7 they are described simply as 'gods', and in Zech 6:5 as 'spirits'. When they are assembled, they form the 'divine council' [עֲדַת־אֱלֹהִים] (Ps. 82:1), the 'assembly of the holy ones' [קְהֵל קְדוֹשִׁים] (Ps. 89:5) and the 'council of the holy ones' [סוּדֵר־קְדוֹשִׁים] (Ps. 89:7).

¹³ Clines (1989) pg. 22. He does not go as far as the concept of 'corporate personality' which he describes as being suspect. For a treatment of this concept, see Pedersen (1926); Robinson (1936) pp. 49ff.; (1941) pp.151ff; Johnson (1961) & (1964). For a re-evaluation of the notion, see Rogerson (1970).

¹⁴ Driver and Gray (1921) pg. 11. Although we see in this figure of the Satan the embryonic form of 'Satan' in later Jewish and Christian thought, it is difficult to demonstrate that within his character in this story, there is an actual evil intent.

¹⁵ Habel (1965) [pp. 309-314] analyses the passage as follows: 1. The Divine Confrontation. (v.1-2). 2. The Introductory Word (v.3-7). 3. The Commission (v.8-10). 4. The Objection (v.11a.) 5. The Reassurance (v.11-13). However it must be noted that there is a striking difference between other call narratives where the prophet at first refuses the call and commissioning (e.g. Exod 3:11; 1Sam 10:22; Jer 1:6), and that there are clearer links with Micaiah's vision.

¹⁶ Long (1976) [pp. 359] writes 'a report which depicts a heavenly scene, or dramatic action, a situation altogether supramundane taken as a portent presaging a future event in the mundane realm.'

the temple.' This idea of a connection between heaven and earth is seen in other passages by the use of the word 'footstool' [הדָּם רִגְלִי]. So the Lord's 'foot stool' can be the 'earth', (Isa. 66:1), the 'ark of the covenant' (2Chron. 28:2), Jerusalem (Lam. 2:1) or the temple (Isa. 60:13). The temple, then, is the backdrop to Isaiah's vision, and it will be by a 'burning coal' [רִצְפוֹת] from its altar (v.6), that he is purified.

At this stage we still have no definite description of the form of the Lord, however the heavenly mythological attendants are described in more detail than we have had thus far. These seraphim [שֶׁרָפִים]¹⁷ are creatures depicted as having six wings: two are used to cover their faces, two to cover their feet, and two to hover above the Lord. The singular *saraph* [שֶׁרָפָה] is found in Num. 21:4-9 where it is associated with a serpent,¹⁸ and in verse 8 of that chapter it is used substitutionally for a serpent.¹⁹ Also the use of *saraph* in connection with snakes in Isaiah 14:29 and 30:6 has led some to think of serpent guardians²⁰ of the holy presence. Whatever the origin of this term seraphim, their role was to praise YHWH and to aid in the purification of Isaiah for his task.

In verse 3 we have the first record of worship by the heavenly attendants, 'one called another' [קָרָא זֶה אֶל־זֶה], this typified Hebrew antiphonal worship.²¹ They were transmitting this message to and fro between them as they replied to each other, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.' This is an important strophe as it is the only hymnic material within the throne visions of the Old Testament. It is only here within the Old Testament that this threefold repetition of 'holy'²² occurs. O. Kaiser²³ suggests that the refrain in Ps. 99:3, 5, 9 seem to be in concentrated form here. The word holy [קֹדֶשׁ] was a fundamental concept within the Hebrew religion. It expresses the notion of separation, distinctiveness, uniqueness, beyond any comparison with any other thing or being (especially when used adjectivally with the Deity).²⁴ The appropriate reaction to 'holiness' is one of awe and wonder, and it emphasises the concept of the transcendence²⁵ of YHWH.

5. Ezekiel's Vision. Ezekiel 1 and 10.

We will now turn our attention to the vision which was one of the major influences in spawning the whole world of Jewish mysticism. This vision also had a big effect on the author of Revelation and the writers of many other apocalypses. The background is that in 597 B.C. Jerusalem was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. King Jehoiachin was deported to Babylon with many of his leading citizens (2 Kgs. 24:14; Jer. 52:28). Among these citizens languished Ezekiel, the prophet and priest.

¹⁷ It is only in Isaiah 6 that the plural of שֶׁרָפָה is used, and also it is only here (within the Old Testament) that the term is used to describe creatures attending YHWH. The number of seraphs here is probably two, which matches the number of cherubim found in the holy of holies.

¹⁸ It is translated 'venomous', 'poisonous', or 'fiery', probably with reference to the verb שָׂרַף 'to burn'.

¹⁹ See Num. 21:6 & Deut. 8:15. PraJac. 1:8 refer to God sitting on 'the serpent gods' which is related to 'the resting place of the cherubim.'

²⁰ Joines (1967) [pg. 410] states that 'there is sufficient linguistic and archeological evidence to suggest that the seraphim are to be identified as winged serpents and are Egyptian symbols of sacral and regal sovereignty'. *OnOrgWld* 105.18-19, refers to 'serpentlike angels, called "Saraphin," which praise him at all times.'

²¹ Cf. Neh. 12:31ff.; Pss. 24; 91; 115; 118; 121; 136. Joines (1967) [pg. 410] has suggested from the phrase 'one called to another' that there were two of them.

²² The adjective 'holy' is used to qualify God's name in the OT more often than all the other qualifiers together.

²³ Kaiser (1983) pg. 126.

²⁴ Objects, things and people that are associated with YHWH can be described as 'holy', but in a derived and secondary way. So Exod. 3:5 (ground); Exod. 16:23 (Sabbath); Exod. 22:31 (men); Exod. 28:2 (garments); Exod. 30:25 (anointing oil); Obad. 16 (mountain); Jonah 2:4 (temple).

²⁵ Stacey (1993) suggests that the quality of holiness cannot be applied to Baal, not because of ethical differences between the two religions (although these did exist), but because Baal was involved with his worshippers in the operation of the created order, whereas YHWH was above, over and beyond it.

Ezekiel 1:1 informs the reader that 'the heavens were opened' [נפתחו השמים]²⁶ and Ezekiel saw 'visions of God' [מראות אלהים]. The opening scene of Ezekiel's vision starts with a windstorm²⁷ (cf. 1Kgs. 19:11; Ps. 29), which is followed by some of the theophany characteristics witnessed at Mount Sinai - an immense cloud, flashing lightening, and fire (cf. 2 Sam. 22:10-13; Ps. 18:10-12). In the centre of the fire was 'something like gleaming amber' [ההשכל].²⁸ Within this stormy environment his eyes begin to focus on four bizarre 'living creatures' [חיות]. In Ezekiel 10 the living creatures²⁹ are identified as cherubim [כרובים].³⁰ The anatomy of these living creatures (as with the 'wheels') is baffling. As the picture becomes clearer he sees that each of the creatures has four wings³¹ and four faces³² at ninety degrees (a human, a lion, an ox³³ and an eagle), these portray the highest representatives of the different spheres³⁴ of the animal creation.

The enclosed area between the living creatures contained 'burning coals' [גחלי-אש בערות] 'like torches' [הלפדים] (cf. Gen. 15:17). There is a link here with Isaiah 6:6 where a 'burning coal' [רצפה] is taken from the altar.³⁵ However there is a difference to the function of the 'burning coals'. In Ezekiel 10:2, they are going to be applied in judgment as they are sprinkled over the city of Jerusalem. In Isaiah 6:6 a single coal is used to purge the prophet's sin.

Overhead, above the living creatures the heavenly brightness is described as 'an expanse' [רקיע] which was like 'awesome crystal' [הקרח הנורא]. This 'expanse' usually refers to the curve of the heavens,³⁶ but in the context here, it is a firm level surface. Thus the vaulted platform on which the throne of God is placed, is supported³⁷ and transported³⁸ through the air, interdependently by the 'living creatures' who are closely associated with the 'wheels' which had 'high and awesome rims which were full of eyes' (v.18). In fact in Ezekiel 10 they seem to merge and it becomes difficult to separate the 'wheels'³⁹ from the living creatures. As the creatures travelled

²⁶ This is a unique expression in the OT. Eichrodt (1970) notes that this expression has a far wider connotation than the usual suggestion of the windows of heaven being opened for gifts or judgments to be sent out (Ps. 78:23; Mal. 28:12; Gen. 7:11; Isa. 24:18).

²⁷ It is very possible that Ezekiel's vision experience started from some natural meteorological phenomenon that he witnessed, which gave rise to his supernatural vision of the glory of the Lord. Another alternative is that the complete experience from start to finish was a vision experience with no starting-point in reality. The former suggestion is probably the more likely.

²⁸ This term is only used here, in Ezek. 1:27 & 8:2. Driver (1951) [pg. 60] suggests it means 'brass'.

²⁹ These 'living creatures' are given more anthropomorphic features than the 'seraphim' of Isaiah 6. So we read of 'human form', 'faces', 'legs', 'feet', 'human hands', 'heads', and 'stood erect'.

³⁰ In fact in this chapter, the author makes the point of mentioning twice that the cherubim 'were the living creatures that I saw by the river Chebar.' (vs.15 & 20).

³¹ Cf. Isaiah's seraphim [שרפים] have 6 wings, while the cherubim [כרובים] which hovered about the Ark of the Covenant had only two wings (Exod. 25:22; Num. 7:89).

³² This seems to be an unique description. No artefact has been found with such features. Greenberg, (1983) [pg. 55] notes that two tiny bronzes from Old Babylonian times show a god and a goddess, each with four *identical human faces*.

³³ The face of the ox is substituted in Ezek. 10:14 for no apparent reason.

³⁴ So represented are: humanity (supreme over the rest of the earthly created order [Gen.1:28]); the heads of the wild and the domestic animals; and the chief bird of the air.

³⁵ There is no altar mentioned in Ezekiel's throne-vision, however the square enclosure between the living creatures could with a little imagination resemble an elementary altar.

³⁶ It clearly has this meaning in Gen. 1:6; Pss. 19:1; 150:1; Dan. 12:3.

³⁷ YHWH was characterised as the one 'who is enthroned on the cherubim' in 1Sam. 4:4; 2Sam. 6:2; 2Kgs 19:15; 1Chron. 13:6; Pss. 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16. So there seems to be a link here between the living creatures and the cherubim.

³⁸ YHWH is pictured riding on a flying cherub in 2Sam. 22:11; Pss. 18:10; 80:1. YHWH also uses clouds as his chariot and rides on a swift cloud controlling the weather. This is a very similar idea to the storm gods in Canaanite myths. See Isa. 19:1 & Ps. 104:3.

³⁹ In Ezek. 10:12 the author appears to attribute a body, hands, and wings to the 'wheels' rather than the cherubim. Halperin (1976) [pg. 137] suggests this verse is an early (post-Ezekiel) witness of the conversion of the wheel into what would develop later into a class of angels ('*ofannim*).

they did not have to turn in order to move because a creature's face was in the direction of the four points of the compass.

The function of all this great description and intricate detail that Ezekiel has given, only serves as an introduction to the main focus of his vision. Perhaps the word 'focus' is rather ironic because we are only given a very vague outline of a figure that is surrounded by fire. The fire gave a bright hue and radiance towards the head of the figure, while from the waist down there was a more threatening fire. However the combined effect was one of great splendour and magnificence. This whole scene is encircled by the glory of a rainbow, the sign of the covenant of God with all life on earth (Gen. 9:17).

'The cumulative effect of all the details of the vision shows Ezekiel the power hidden behind the curtain of earthly reality....Divine perfection, power and authority are themselves impressively symbolized by the glittering vision with all its reality.'⁴⁰

Unlike Isaiah who divulges nothing about the form of the Lord, Ezekiel has given us, albeit very tentatively and vaguely, a description of the enthroned human-like form. However it has been left to Daniel to reveal in detail the features of the 'Ancient of Days' sitting on his throne.

6. Daniel's Vision. Daniel 7.

Scholars are generally agreed that the book of Daniel is the example *par excellence* of apocalyptic in the Old Testament.⁴¹ It is the only full-blown, full-length apocalypse to make its way into the Hebrew Bible.⁴² Daniel 7 which is written in Aramaic, is the first in a series of four apocalyptic visions.⁴³ It can be divided into two sections: i) The vision, vv. 1-14. ii) The interpretation vv. 15-28. This chapter has thrown up a plethora of interpretations, but the unequivocal message is that the Most High is in total control over heaven and earth. The opponents to this rule may appear to triumph, but in the final analysis the outcome and their fate was never in doubt.

Most scholars would accept the mythological imagery of Daniel 7. So, J. J. Collins for example states that 'the vision bristles with ancient motifs'⁴⁴ and the vision of the four beasts 'is dominated by the tradition of the chaos monster of ancient myth' according to G.R Beasley-Murray.⁴⁵ However, taking a different view, L.F. Hartmann and A.A. Di Lella could write in their commentary, that 'there is no need to look for any direct borrowing from ancient mythological literature....but essentially the four monstrous beasts of Dan. 7:3-7 are *ad hoc* creations of the author.'⁴⁶ Most scholars agree that the author(s) of Daniel has borrowed quite a few constituents of Ezekiel's *merkabah* vision. This is especially clear in the visions of chapters 8 and 10 which are written in Hebrew, but there are also parallels in our chapter. As we turn to verse 9 we see that it is a watershed. The scene is instantaneously transformed. 'In contrast with the chaos of Great Ocean, its hurricanes and portentous monsters, appears the august vision of God come to judgment.'⁴⁷ This theme of judgment provided the whole setting and background for Daniel 7 (cf. Pss. 9:7,16,19). Thrones were placed, but there is no emphasis on the plurality, only one throne is occupied. There is still a sense of movement of the throne ('thrones were set in place' [כרסין רמין] and 'wheels' [גלגל]⁴⁸ are mentioned in verse 9), but it is far less so than it is in Ezekiel's vision where there is a most definite sense of the throne being transported across the heavens by the 'living creatures'. However, as in Ezekiel, there is a great emphasis on fire. The throne was like 'flames of fire' [שביבין דינור] (v.9), the

⁴⁰ Eichrodt (1970) pg. 58.

⁴¹ Baldwin (1978) pg. 46.

⁴² Halperin (1988) pg. 76.

⁴³ Daniel chapters 7,8,9, & 10-12.

⁴⁴ Collins (1977) pg. 96.

⁴⁵ Beasley-Murray (1983) pg. 44.

⁴⁶ Hartmann (1978) pg. 212.

⁴⁷ Montgomery (1926A) pg. 296.

⁴⁸ Zevet (1968) suggest the 'wheels' of Dan.7:9 may be part of the ornamentation of the throne referring to the 'round top' of Solomon's throne (1Kgs. 10:19).

wheels were 'burning fire' [נור דלק] (v.9), and a 'river of fire' [נהר די־נור] (v.10) flowed out from God's presence. This motif of fire has many connotations in the Old Testament, including: the presence of God (Exod. 3:2-4); judgment (Ezek.10:2, 6,7); and preparation for God's coming (Pss. 50:3, 97:3).

On the throne, surrounded by a great throng who serve [שמש] and attend [קדם], the Judge is seated and the session is about to commence as 'the books were opened' (v.10). God's tomes⁴⁹ of judgment lie opened with their recorded words ready to convict. There is not only the notion of the Judge in his court for judgment, but there is also, the royal imagery where the God is enthroned with thousands of courtiers in attendance. So the 'Ancient of days' [עתיק יומין] takes his seat to execute judgment on the beast whose kingdom was given to the 'one like a son of man' [Hebrew: בן אדם; Aramaic: בר אנש]. Before leaving Daniel 7 we will consider a little more closely these two particular terms.

The term 'Ancient of Days'⁵⁰ is a very unusual expression. The Deity is depicted as a very old person, probably to convey the idea of his eternal existence. There may also have been the sense of calmness and wisdom (in Hebraic thought there existed the concept of the sage who was inevitably someone who was mature in years). The description of his formidable appearance and dazzling clothing depicts an awesome splendour. Montgomery suggests (probably over-interpreting somewhat) that 'the apparition of the Person is shining white, his hoary hair betokening his venerableness, while the white vesture indicates unsullied majesty, always of notables, and so of the denizens of heaven.'⁵¹ A sense of absolute power and complete purity pervades the scene.

Secondly, we will now consider the term the 'son of man.' It is very difficult to know where to start, because 'it is no exaggeration to say that no other concept in the Old Testament, not even the Servant of the Lord, has elicited a more prolific literature.'⁵² We will limit our comments to a condensed summary of this topic, focusing mainly on the significance of Daniel's use of it. The term 'son of man' refers to any individual human being.⁵³ In fact in Psalm 8: 4 the terms 'human beings' [אנש] and 'mortals' [בן אדם], are used interchangeably. Within this vision scene other dimensions are added to this term. It should be noted that in Dan. 7:13, the figure who approaches the 'Ancient of Days' is described as '*like* a human being' [lit. 'son of man']. This 'human-like figure' is given an everlasting dominion, an indestructible kingdom. However in the interpretation of his vision, in verse 18 (cf. v. 27), we learn that the 'holy ones of the Most High' [קדיש עליין] 'shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever - forever and ever.' This raises the question, "What is the link between the 'human-like figure' and the 'holy ones of the Most High'?" There are various possibilities.

Firstly the terms could be taken as being more or less synonymous i.e. the 'son of man' is a collective term for the 'holy ones of the Most High'. Secondly, J. J. Collins⁵⁴ perceives the 'holy ones of the Most High' as angelic beings, with the 'son of man' being the leader of this group.⁵⁵ Thirdly, the 'son of man' could be understood as simply the symbolic representative of the 'holy ones of the Most High.' M. Black argues that 'Daniel was contemplating nothing less than the *apotheosis* of Israel in the end-time, a 'deification', as it were, of the 'saints of the Most High'. The step to a messianic interpretation of the Son (of Man) is not yet taken in Daniel, but it is the next logical development of the tradition of a corporate apotheosis of a righteous nucleus of the chosen people.'⁵⁶ However, G. R. Beasley-Murray suggests that

⁴⁹ Exod. 32:32; Pss. 56:8; 139:16; Mal. 3:16.

⁵⁰ BDB defines it as 'one, advanced, aged, in days.'

⁵¹ Montgomery (1927) pg. 298.

⁵² Baldwin (1978) pg. 154.

⁵³ We have this use in Ezekiel (Ezek. 2:1,3, 6,8 and so on throughout the book). The NSRV translates the term as 'mortal.'

⁵⁴ Collins (1974) pp. 50ff.

⁵⁵ Beasley-Murray (1983) put forward arguments against these first two suggestions: i) pg. 55 ii) pg. 51-54.

⁵⁶ See Black (1976) [pg. 61-63] for details of his argument.

although the messianic interpretation is not demonstrable, it is plausible, and even probable. 'The man-like one represents the saints in the kingdom, as the interpretation emphasizes, but inasmuch as the sovereignty over the world is that of God, exercised through the "man," he is also the representative of God. This dual role of the "man" accords with the messianic traditions of the OT.'⁵⁷

B. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.

1. 1 Enoch.

1 Enoch is a book of composite authorship which is made up of five separate booklets.

Our main interests lie in: a. The Book of Watchers (1En.1-36) b. The Similitudes (1En. 37-71).

a. The Book of Watchers.

This is one of the earliest sections of 1 Enoch, probably dating from towards the beginning of the second century BC.⁵⁸ The Myth of the Watchers (1En. 6-16) derives from and amplifies the passage in Genesis 6:1-4 furnishing an explanation for the origin of evil. This legend includes the cosmic rapture of Enoch to the throne room of God (1En.14-16).

The exordium of Enoch's recounting of his experience bears many similarities to Ezekiel's vision (Ezek.1). He is beside a river⁵⁹ (1En. 13:7; cf. Ezek.1:1), he lifts his eyes to heaven and sees visions, (1En. 13:8; cf. Ezek. 1:1, 4), a voice came to him (1En. 13:8; cf. Ezek. 1:3), and lastly, there were clouds⁶⁰...dark clouds, lightnings⁶¹, winds, and a fiery presence⁶² (1En. 14:8; cf. Ezek. 1:4). The motif of fire⁶³ is a common one throughout the Book of Watchers.⁶⁴ In the immediate passage, 1Enoch 14, there are 'tongues of fire' (1En. 14:9,10,15), 'fireballs' (1En. 14:11,16), 'fiery Cherubim'⁶⁵ (1En. 14:11), 'a flaming fire' and 'ablaze with fire' (1En. 14:12), 'hot as fire' (1En. 14:13), 'a floor of fire' and 'a roof of blazing fire' (1En. 14:16), 'streams of blazing fire' (1En. 14:19) and 'a blazing fire encircled him' and 'a great fire stood in front of him'⁶⁶ (1En. 14:22). This inferno coexists paradoxically with the other extreme of temperature, coldness.⁶⁷ So there is a wall and a large house 'built of hailstones' (1En. 14:9,10), and 'walls.. like tessellated paving stones, all of snow, and its floor was of snow' (1En. 14:10). These conditions produce fever-like symptoms in Enoch, he feels 'as hot as fire and cold as snow' (1En. 14:13).

In the vision there are two houses. Enoch is able to enter the first (1En. 14:13), but it appears that he is not permitted to enter the second larger one, and is only allowed to progress to its threshold (1En. 14:25). Through this fully opened door⁶⁸ (1En. 14:15), the glorious and grand contents of the house are clearly visible. The throne is described as being lofty,⁶⁹ having the

⁵⁷ Beasley-Murray (1976) pg. 58. For his argument, see pp. 55-58.

⁵⁸ So for example, Nickelsburg (1981) [pg.48] states, 'These chapters are a product of the period before 175 B.C.E.'; Knibb (1985) [pg. 28] notes, 'The book of Watchers is from the end of the third or the beginning of the second century B.C.'

⁵⁹ Cf. also Dan. 8:2; 10:4.

⁶⁰ Cf. also Ezek. 1:28; 10:3-4; Dan. 7:13.

⁶¹ Cf. also Ezek. 1:13,14.

⁶² Unless stated otherwise, the text quoted is from the translation of Black (1985).

⁶³ The subject of fire is found in Ezekiel's visions (Ezek. 1.4, 13, 27; 10.2 6-7). However there is more emphasis here in 1En.14.

⁶⁴ See 1En. 1:6; 4:1; 8:3; 10:13; 17:1,3,4,5; 18:6,9,11,13,15; 21:3,7; 23:2,4; 24:1.

⁶⁵ Cf. Second Ezekiel 4Q385 Frag. 4, line 12, 'living creatures...as flaming coals'.

⁶⁶ Cf. Dan. 7:9

⁶⁷ Cf. Ps. 18:12. In the second house there is only the presence of heat. However the throne is described as an appearance 'like crystals of ice' (1En. 14:18) and God clothing is described as 'whiter than snow' (1En. 14:20).

⁶⁸ Cf. Rev. 4:1 'in heaven a door stood open'.

⁶⁹ Cf. Isa. 6:1, Ezek. 1:26; 10:1.

appearance like crystals of ice,⁷⁰ having wheels,⁷¹ and with streams of fire beneath it.⁷² On the throne is seated 'the glory of the Great One'⁷³ clothed in apparel 'brighter than the sun, and whiter than any snow.'⁷⁴ No angel, nor mortal is able to look on his face.⁷⁵ He is above advice⁷⁶ and his 'every word was a deed'.⁷⁷ Around him were 'ten thousand times ten thousand'⁷⁸ and 'the watchers and holy ones' who were ever-present. Enoch's reaction to this scene has been to lie prostrate on his face before God in fear.⁷⁹

We have to move into 1En. 15:2 to establish the *raison d'être* of this vision. Its function is the commissioning of Enoch⁸⁰ by God for his role as his prophet. His oracle is typically one of judgement, however it is to be delivered, not to mortals, but to the angelic watchers.

b. The Similitudes (1 Enoch. 37-71).

This is a Jewish document written most probably before 100 AD.⁸¹ It was probably at one stage an independent book. Although various fragment of 1Enoch have been found at Qumran, there has been no trace found of the Similitudes of Enoch. It comprises three parables (1En. 38-44; 1En. 45-57 & 1En. 58-70), and an appendix (1En. 71).⁸² The parables are in the form of a vision in which Enoch is transported to heaven and is given various revelations.

The section 1Enoch 39:3-41:2 records Enoch's first ascent to the heavenly throne-room. In stormy conditions he is caught up to heaven where he sees the dwelling places of the righteous, the holy ones, the angels and also the Elect One. The righteous and elect and Enoch praise the Name of the Lord of spirits. Then 'those who sleep not' recite two doxologies: i) 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of spirits: he fills the earth with spirits' (cf. Isa. 6:3). ii) Blessed be thou, and blessed be the Name the Lord of spirits for ever and ever' (cf. Ezek 3:12).

Next he sees 'thousand upon thousands and myriads upon myriad' - too large a number to calculate - who stand before the glory of the Lord of spirits. In addition to these are four presences on the four sides of the Lord of spirits - Michael, Raphael, Gabriel and Phanuel - who utter praise before the Lord of glory. Enoch then proceeds on a heavenly journey where he sees all the secrets of heaven which include meteorological phenomena.

In 1En. 46:1-2 and 1En. 47:3 there are two short throne scenes which are clearly influenced by the vision of Daniel 7. In the first there is 'One who had a head of days' and his head was like wool and there is a reference to the 'Son of Man',⁸³ while in the second the 'Chief of Days' is sitting on his throne of glory with all the host of heaven and his council standing before him. In this scene the books of the living are opened.

⁷⁰ Cf. Ezek. 1:26; Exod. 24:9.

⁷¹ Cf. Dan. 7:9; Ezek. 1:15-18; 10:9-11; LLAE 25:3.

⁷² Cf. Dan. 7:10; 4QBerakhot^a 4Q286 Frag. 1 Col.2, line3.

⁷³ Black (1985) considers this to be the original meaning. See pp. 104-5, 149-50.

⁷⁴ Cf. Dan. 9:7.

⁷⁵ Cf. Exod. 33:20; Targ. Ezek. 1.27.

⁷⁶ Cf. Isa. 40:13,14.

⁷⁷ Black (1985) [pg. 151] suggests that this phrase, which is absent from the Ethiopic version, means that God's commands are immediately carried out by himself or by others. This idea is developed in later Jewish mysticism. Thus in the *Ma'aseh Bereshit* ('The Mechanics/Labours of Creation'), Sefer Yetsira (Ch.1 mishna 1) envisages the animated letters of God's words as one of the three principles of the creation of the universe.

⁷⁸ Cf. Dan. 7:10; Ps. 68:17; Rev. 5:11.

⁷⁹ Throughout his heavenly experience Enoch's reaction has been that of great trepidation (1En. 14:9 'began to terrify me'; 1En. 14:13 'horror overwhelmed me, and trembling took hold of me'; 1En. 14:14 'shaking and trembling'. Cf. Dan. 7:15; 1En. 60:3; 65:4; LadJac. 2:1; ApAbr. 10:2.

⁸⁰ Cf. 1Kgs. 22:20; Isa. 6:6; Ezek. 2:3.

⁸¹ So, for example, Mearns (1979) [pg 369] suggests late 40s AD; Knibb (1979) [pg. 359] proposes some time after the events of AD 66-73. Suter (1977) [pg. 32] notes 'while the midst of the first century A.D. seems to be the most likely time of composition, that judgment does not carry a high degree of probability.' Milik's (1971) [pg. 377] suggestion of a date around AD 270 has not held much sway.

⁸² See Collins (1984) [pp. 151-53] for a discussion of the relationship between 1En. 71 and the rest of the Similitudes.

⁸³ Later on the Son of Man (or the Elect One) is enthroned - 1En. 51:3; 62:2: 69:27, 29.

The last chapter, 1 En. 71, would appear to be an appendix. It has been suggested that this section interprets 1En. 14-16 and 1 En. 46 in terms of one another. Enoch's ascent and commissioning as a prophet of judgment (1En.14-16) are interpreted as his preparation as 'the son of man who was born for righteousness.'⁸⁴ Thus because of this there is much repetition of material, especially from 1 Enoch 14. However there are some new additions. Initially there are two rivers of fire, and the sons of the holy angels were treading on flames of fire. Then on the four sides of the house there were streams of fire filled with the fire of the living creatures. However more significantly the Chief of Days leaves his house accompanied by his holy angels, and comes to meet Enoch. Secondly this meeting causes not only weakness through fear in Enoch, but his spirit also experiences transformation and as a result he is able to praise God (1En. 71:11-12).

2. *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian.

Ezekiel the tragic poet was a Jewish⁸⁵ playwright writing probably from Alexandria in the middle of the second century B.C. His only work to survive is 'The Exodus' (Ἐξαγωγή)⁸⁶ which is based on the story of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. The *Exagoge*, the earliest Jewish play known to us, is a work of five acts⁸⁷ revolving around the life and times of Moses. It comprises the synthesis of embellished biblically-based narrative with the Greek poetic genre of drama and epic. However, the second scene (68-89) which is of interest to us has no biblical precedent, although it has been influenced by biblical material. It includes two sections: (a) Moses' vision (68-82) and (b) Raguel's⁸⁸ interpretation (83-89).

In Moses' dream he sees the massive cosmic throne which spanned the space between mount Sinai's⁸⁹ peak and the clouds of heaven. The occupant of the throne is God in lordly human appearance. God vacates his throne and summons Moses to take his place on it. He is also given the kingly regalia of crown and sceptre. From his lofty vantage point Moses surveys the universe and counts the stars receiving homage from them. Here his vision ends and he awakes in an agitated state. Moses' father-in law then enlightens Moses as to the meaning of his awesome dream. Moses will attain a judicial and ruling role over mortals. He will also be given discernment of matters, present, past and future.

This vision contains some intriguing aspects, however it is relatively sparse in its depiction of the heavenly throne scene. There is no reference to heavenly worshippers and attendants, nor to fire and brightness which are prevalent in other throne visions. The throne is only delineated by its size and its location on the summit of mount Sinai.⁹⁰ The anthropomorphic form seated on the throne echoes canonical Ezekiel 1:26 and perhaps even more so Daniel 7:9. This figure possesses the royal accessories and adornments of diadem and sceptre.

Next we learn that this vision has a commissioning function. The critical point is what level of exultation is bestowed on Moses by his appointment. Moses views all creation,⁹¹ and as he numbers the stars⁹² they prostrate themselves before him.⁹³ He is seated on the very throne of God. See earlier in pp. 91ff. for a discussion on this last topic of Moses' enthronement.

⁸⁴ Nickelsburg (1981A) pg. 221.

⁸⁵ Kuiper (1903) suggested rather a Samaritan origin.

⁸⁶ 269 iambic trimeters of 'The Exodus' survived due to the work by, and quotations of, Alexander Polyhistor, Eusebius of Caesarea, Clement of Alexandria and Eustathius of Antioch.

⁸⁷ This is the typical Greek structure.

⁸⁸ Albright (1963) [pp 1-11] looks at the various traditions of Moses' father-in-law's name.

⁸⁹ This identification actually depends on an emendation of the text.

⁹⁰ Cf. Exod. 24:9-11.

⁹¹ Cf. Ps. 3:13-15; ApAbr. 19:3.

⁹² Cf. Gen. 15:5; Ps. 147:4; Isa. 40:6.

⁹³ There is a precursor to this scene in Gen. 37:9. Here the patriarch Joseph witnesses in a dream 'the sun, the moon, and eleven stars' bowing down before him. In Neh. 9:6 we read '...and the hosts of heaven worship [God]'.

3. Ascension of Isaiah.

The Ascension of Isaiah is extant completely in an Ethiopic translation (there are also Greek, Latin and Coptic fragments).⁹⁴ It can be divided into two sections: (a) the Martyrdom of Isaiah⁹⁵ (chaps. 1-5) which recounts a legendary story of the martyrdom of Isaiah at the hands of Manasseh,⁹⁶ and (b) The Vision of Isaiah (chaps. 6-11) which relates Isaiah's heavenly journey in the reign of Hezekiah.⁹⁷ It is a Christian apocalypse⁹⁸ written perhaps within a few decades of Revelation.⁹⁹

AscIsa. 6 sets the scene for Isaiah's vision. He is present in the royal court of Hezekiah when he receives a heavenly vision in his mind, shown to him by an angel from the seventh heaven, while in an ecstatic trance. The report of this revelation is disclosed in AscIsa. 7-11. After passing through the firmament where Isaiah witnessed the struggle directed by Sammael on earth,¹⁰⁰ his angelic guide leads him through the six lower heavens to the seventh. This was a progressively glorious experience. Before entering into the final two heavens he has firstly to pass through the 'air' of each of these heavens. The seventh heaven is the dwelling-place of innumerable angels and many of the Old Testament worthies from Adam onwards. It is also the abode of the Father, the Beloved (Christ), and the Holy Spirit. There are otherworldly books which contained the 'deeds of the children of Israel' (AscIsa. 9:22), and robes, thrones and crowns are stored for believers (AscIsa. 9:24-26. cf. 7:22).

From his vantage point in the seventh heaven Isaiah witnessed the Lord's commissioning by the Father, his descent through the heavens, his miraculous birth, his infancy and life, his crucifixion and resurrection, his ascension with accompanying praise through the heavens, and his installation at the right hand of the Great Glory (AscIsa. 10:7-11:33).

This story of Isaiah's journey through the six heavens and his entry into the seventh heaven contains some points of interest. In each of the heavens, with the exception of the sixth, there was a central throne¹⁰¹ with praising angels flanking it on the right and left.¹⁰² Their singing is directed upwards to '[the One who sits in] the seventh heaven...and to his Beloved' (AscIsa. 7:17 cf. Rev. 5). During his ascent, Isaiah's glory increases. When he reaches the seventh heaven he is equal with the angels, and can participate in the singing and worship around the throne (AscIsa. 9:28ff.).¹⁰³ These aspects have a close affinity with the later *Hekhalot* literature.¹⁰⁴ The Ascension of Isaiah also contains the motif of the prohibition of the worship of angels (AscIsa. 7:21; cf. Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9; ApZeph. 6:15).

⁹⁴ AscIsa. 6-11 has survived by itself in two Latin translations and in a Slavonic version.

⁹⁵ The Martyrdom of Isaiah contains a subsection (AscIsa. 3:13-4:22) known as the Testament of Hezekiah.

⁹⁶ See 2Kgs. 21:1-18; 2Chron. 33:1-20.

⁹⁷ See 2Kgs 18:1-20:21; 2Chron. 29:1-32:33.

⁹⁸ There is much discussion as to whether it is a composite or unitary writing. So Knibb *OTP2* (1985) [pg. 143, 147-149], following older source-critical theories, views it as a composite work. Bauckham (1993) [pg. 119 nt. 4] views the Ascension of Isaiah as a unitary work of Christian origin. Our area of interest revolves around AscIsa. 6-11, the Vision of Isaiah, and there is general agreement that these chapters are of Christian origin.

⁹⁹ See Charles (1900) [pp. xlv-xlv] (late first century); Charlesworth (1981) [pg. 68] (late first century); Knibb *OTP2* (1985) [pp. 149-150] (late first-early second century); Hall (1990A) [pg. 306] (end of first century-beginning of second century); Rist *IDB II* [pp. 745] (late first century). However recently Bauckham (1998) [pp. 381ff.] dates it between 70-80 C.E.

¹⁰⁰ AscIsa. 7:9-12. Cf. Eph. 6:12; Rev. 12:7-9.

¹⁰¹ Strictly speaking there is no mention of a throne in the seventh heaven however it can be assumed from AscIsa. 6:8. 'the God of righteousness...who sits on high.'

¹⁰² In the first five heavens the angels on the left are inferior in glory, voice and praise to those on the right. However in the last two heavens equality exists.

¹⁰³ For a discussion of Isaiah's transformation, see Himmelfarb (1986) pp. 98-104.

¹⁰⁴ See Bauckham (1993) pp. 140ff.; Gruenwald (1980) pp. 57-62. See Helmbold (1983); Rist *IDB II* [pg. 745] for Gnostic elements in Ascension of Isaiah and Flusser (1953) for associations with the Dead Sea Sect.

4. Ladder of Jacob.

The pseudepigraphon, the Ladder of Jacob is an interpretation of the patriarch Jacob's vision at Bethel recorded in Genesis 28:10-22.¹⁰⁵ It has survived only in two recensions in Old Church Slavonic. There is discussion as to whether Jacob's Ladder is an apocalypse¹⁰⁶ or not,¹⁰⁷ and as to whether it is a Jewish¹⁰⁸ or Christian work.¹⁰⁹ We shall regard this work as a Jewish apocalypse which was written originally around 100 AD.¹¹⁰

The dream provides an embellished description of Jacob's ladder. As in Genesis 28:12 it reaches from earth to heaven and angels are climbing¹¹¹ up and down on it. However this stairway has twelve steps each of which has two flanking human faces.¹¹² Above yet another face 'as of a man, carved out of fire'¹¹³ at the top of the ladder, stood God. They enter into conversation and Jacob received a prophecy concerning the future blessing of his progeny.¹¹⁴ When Jacob awakens he is still aware of 'the voice'¹¹⁵ which has been described as 'a hypostatic creature.'¹¹⁶

Jacob's night vision experience evokes a hymn of praise which gives a description of the throne-room scene. In this song the Lord God is recognised as being the Creator¹¹⁷ who has providential control over his creation.¹¹⁸ He is enthroned on the cherubim. This is also described by the parallel expression the 'fiery throne of glory.' The only detail of the cherubim's description we can glean from the text is that they possess four faces. However there is more information about their heavenly colleagues, the seraphim. Interestingly they are described as being many eyed. This is usually a feature reserved for the living creatures (cherubim) and the ophanim (wheels).¹¹⁹ However, more typically, they possess six wings which are used for covering their feet and faces, and flying (cf. Isa. 6:2; Rev. 4:8). They continuously worship God with their song of praise in an attitude of holy fear. This hymn quoted in LadJac. 2:17-20 is an expansion of the seraph's song of Isa. 6:3.¹²⁰

¹⁰⁵ For recent observations on this passage, see Otto (1976) pp. 165-90; Houtman (1977) pp. 337-51.

¹⁰⁶ Bauckham (1986) [pg. 97] states that the 'Ladder of Jacob is unambiguously an apocalypse,' and also that it is 'generically an apocalypse.'

¹⁰⁷ Charlesworth *OTP2* (1985) includes it under the classification of 'Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends' and describes it in the Anchor Bible Dictionary Vol. III [pg. 609] as a 'haggadic exegetical expansion of Jacob's vision (Gen. 28:11-22) with apocalyptic elements.'

¹⁰⁸ Lunt *OTP2* (1985) [pg. 404] tentatively refers to 'the possibly original Jewish document' in his discussion on the date and provenance of the Ladder of Jacob. Bauckham (1993) [pg. 129] writes 'The Ladder of Jacob is certainly a Jewish apocalypse (with a Christian addition in chapter 7).'

¹⁰⁹ Yarbrow Collins (1979) classifies the Ladder of Jacob as an early Christian apocalypse.

¹¹⁰ This date is suggested because of its similarities to the Apocalypse of Abraham.

¹¹¹ In Gen. 28:12 the order is 'ascending and descending' which is the same here in the LadJac. 1:7 (cf. Jn. 1:51). However in the LadJac. 7:1 the order is reversed and the angels are described as 'descending and ascending the ladder. This is the sequence most typical in Jewish pseudepigraphal works.

¹¹² This gives a total of twenty-four faces or busts because they are described as 'including their chests'.

¹¹³ It is possible that this is God's face, but the text is very obscure here.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Gen. 28:13-15.

¹¹⁵ See also LadJac. 3:1 'behold a voice came before my face'.

¹¹⁶ Charlesworth (1985A) pp. 19-41.

¹¹⁷ See LadJac. 2:6 'Adam your creature'; LadJac. 2:10 'you who have made the skies.'

¹¹⁸ See LadJac. 2:9 'carrying the whole world under your arm'; LadJac. 2:11,12 'stretching out on two heavenly clouds the heaven which gleams under you, that beneath it you cause the sun to course and conceal it during the night'; LadJac. 2:14 'you make the moon wax and wane, and destine the stars to pass on'.

¹¹⁹ See Ezek. 1:10; 10:12; Rev. 4:6,8; ApAbr. 18:3.

¹²⁰ LadJac 2:18-19 expands Isa. 6:3a while LadJac. 2:20 expands Isa. 6:3b.

5. Apocalypse of Abraham.

The ancient Jewish Apocalypse of Abraham has survived only in a Slavonic version.¹²¹ The original composition dates from the end of the first to the beginning of the second century AD. The author or the group responsible for its writing is uncertain.¹²² It can be divided into two parts: (a) Chapters 1-8, the account of Abraham's conversion from idolatry and (b) Chapters 9-32, the record of his ascent and guided tour of the heavenly regions with a vision of enthroned deity and of the future. It is the second apocalyptic section¹²³ which is of interest to us, (especially ApAbr. 18:1-14).

Before his ascent to heaven Abraham had to participate in a preparatory sacrifice¹²⁴ and certain abstentions.¹²⁵ On their completion Abraham and his angelic guide, Iaoel,¹²⁶ ascend¹²⁷ on a pigeon and a turtledove 'to the borders of the flaming fire' (ApAbr. 15:3), where there is a light of indescribable brilliance. These are the peripheral regions of the divine throne. Here they worship and Abraham recites a celestial hymn of praise¹²⁸ which the angel taught him, that enumerates several of God's names and his attributes (ApAbr. 17).

In ApAbr. 18 Abraham is afforded a vision of the divine throne. His first sensation is to hear a voice 'like the roaring of the sea'¹²⁹ above the noise of the fire. This fire rises to reveal underneath it a 'throne of fire'. Around the throne are 'the all-seeing ones' which correspond to the 'ophannim' (wheels) in Ezekiel 1:18. Beneath the throne are 'four fiery living creatures',¹³⁰ with the appearance of a lion, man, ox and eagle. They are attributed four heads and four faces (v.5b). I. Gruenwald calls attention to the later Jewish mystical and Gnostic interest in the number of the creatures' faces.¹³¹ They have six wings as the seraphs in Isaiah 6:2 and the living creatures in Revelation 4:8. As they finish singing they look aggressively at each other. Iaoel has to change the position of each of their countenances so that their threatening profiles are not visible to each of them, and has to teach them 'the song of peace'.

¹²¹ The Slavonic version is thought to be translated from a Greek text, which was made from a Semitic (probably Hebrew) original. So it is difficult to assess how much redaction has taken place. However Bauckham (1986) [pp. 108-9] notes that 'most of the contents of the apocalypse have sufficient parallels in other Jewish documents to give us confidence in their originality.' Further, there is nothing of any substance within ApAbr. 18 which would signal any Christian or gnostic interpolations.

¹²² Box (1918) [pg. xxi] & Philonenko-Sayor (1981) [pp. 34-35] suggest a Essene origin. While Rubinkiewicz (1979) [pp. 137] writes 'Elle émane d'un Juif palestinien très proche des cercles esséniens.'

¹²³ It is based on Genesis 15, the narrative of Abraham's sacrifice and trance.

¹²⁴ ApAbr. 9:5; 12:6-9; 15:1.

¹²⁵ ApAbr. 9:7; 12:1-2. For discussion of preparatory periods of time and associated practices before apocalyptic and mystical experiences, see I. Gruenwald (1980) chapter 4, especially pp. 99-102.

¹²⁶ The name of the archangel Iaoel is a combination of YHWH (JAO) and El. In ApAbr. 17 God is addressed as Iaoel. In ApAbr. 10:8 Iaoel states 'a power by virtue of the ineffable Name that is dwelling in me'. In ApAbr. 11:2,3 some of the attributes of Iaoel derive from Old Testament descriptions of God, and there is a strong priestly and kingly influence [see M. Himmelfarb (1993) pg. 62]. For a discussion on Iaoel's association with the Metatron tradition see Scholem (1931) pp. 170 ff.

¹²⁷ The mode of Abraham's ascent to the throne-room is relatively simple. There is no mention of travelling through various heavens. However it should be noted in ApAbr. 19-21 there is the depiction of a multi-levelled heaven.

¹²⁸ See Scholem (1954) [pg. 61] for a review of this hymn. It resembles angelic songs found in later Jewish mystic literature. For hymns and incantations in *Hekhalot* literature, see Gruenwald (1980) chapter 4, especially pp. 102-109. The function of the hymn here in our text appears to be to elucidate the vision of divine throne.

¹²⁹ See earlier in ApAbr. 17:1 'a voice of many waters, like the sea in its uproar' and ApAbr. 17:15 'whose voice is like the thunder'. Also cf. Dan.10:6; Rev. 1:15; 2En. 39:7.

¹³⁰ In Ezekiel 1 & 10, there is no allusion to fiery beings. However 1 Enoch 14:11 refers to 'fiery cherubim' and in Second Ezekiel 4Q385 frag.4 line 9 the living creatures are described as 'like coals of fire'.

¹³¹ Gruenwald (1980) pp. 56-57 nt. 93 & pg.114.

As Abraham stands watching by himself he sees a chariot situated behind the living creatures, and its wheels are fiery and full of eyes. Above this is the throne which is enveloped and encircled with fire, and the 'fiery host' is surrounded by an 'indescribable fire.'¹³² From this blazing inferno Abraham hears and enters into conversation with a holy, incorporeal¹³³ voice 'like the voice of a man'. This is God speaking to him. Although Abraham is accompanied on his journey by an angel, it is God who explains what is seen (ApAbr. 19-31).

6. The Life of Adam and Eve.

There is an abundance of material that embellishes the biblical account of Adam and Eve.¹³⁴ Two of the most important are the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* (GLAE)¹³⁵ and the Latin *Vita Adae et Evae* (LLAE). There is a significant overlap between these two versions. However in passages that are of interest to us, these are exclusive to each work. It is virtually impossible to establish the provenance and date of the original work. However there appears to be some support for a Jewish author writing in the first or early second century A.D.¹³⁶

a. Greek *Life of Adam and Eve*. GLAE 33-40.

In GLAE 33:2 as Eve looked heavenward she sees an approaching chariot of light pulled by 'four radiant eagles'. It was impossible for 'anyone born from the womb' to speak of the glory of these birds or to look on their faces. However presumably Eve, because of her unique creation, could do this. The chariot comes to a halt at the place where Adam's body is lying.¹³⁷ The angels who had proceeded the chariot perform a religious ceremony before the celestial altar with frankincense, golden censers, and three bowls. Their actions cause the fumes of incense to blacken the sky' (GLAE 33:4). This eclipse is short-lived as Eve and Seth see the seven heavens opened and they see the sun and moon, and the angels interceding on Adam's behalf (GLAE 35-36).

In GLAE 37:3 one of the six-winged seraphim washed Adam's body three times in the Lake of Acheron in God's presence. After lying for three hours before God's holy throne, the Lord delivers Adam's body to the archangel Michael with the instruction to convey him to 'Paradise, to the third heaven' (GLAE 37:5). In GLAE 38 God summons his angels and they assemble according to rank. After giving them their orders, he mounts his chariot 'the wind drawing him, and the cherubim being above the winds; and the angels of heaven were leading him' (GLAE 38:3). They arrive in the heavenly Paradise to collect the body of Adam so that they can return to the earthly paradise for his interment.

It is difficult to always clearly assess the location where the action is taking place. However it appears that between the earthly and the heavenly Paradise there is a movement at times to a mid-air location. This is where the celestial altar is situated and the gathering of the angels in GLAE 38:1-3. There is also a certain amount of fluidity between God's holy throne and his chariot.¹³⁸

b. Latin *Life of Adam and Eve*. LLAE 25-28.

In this text Adam reveals secrets to his son Seth, which are disclosed to him in the heavenly 'Paradise of righteousness.'¹³⁹ Adam is transported there in a 'chariot like the wind'¹⁴⁰ and its

¹³² This emphasis on everything in heaven being fiery is rather distinctive, based most probably on Gen. 15:17.

¹³³ In ApAbr. 19: 4 there is reference to 'a power of invisible glory over the living creatures'.

¹³⁴ For a recent treatment of this literature, see Stone (1992) and also Jonge de (1997).

¹³⁵ This work was originally erroneously called the *Apocalypse of Moses*. Jonge de (1997) [pg. 12] suggests that for clarity it should be referred to as the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve*. This is the designation that we shall follow.

¹³⁶ This is *contra* Jonge de (1997) [pp. 74, 77] who suggests Christian authorship anywhere between 100 & 600 A.D.

¹³⁷ This is the second appearance of the chariot (currus) on earth in this work. Earlier God had come to Paradise to judge Adam. He arrived 'seated on a chariot of cherubim, and the angels were praising him' (GLAE 22:3).

¹³⁸ This impression is also seen in LLAE 25:1-3 where Adam's mode of transport, the 'chariot like the wind,' appears to be simultaneously the throne upon which God is seated.

¹³⁹ Quotations are from Johnson, *OTP* (1985) pp. 258-295.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. 2Kgs. 2:11; Isa. 66:15; Jer. 4:13; Ps. 104:3; 1En.14:8; 52:1.

wheels were fiery.¹⁴¹ He views the enthroned Lord¹⁴² who has an unendurable fiery appearance.¹⁴³

Situated around the chariot, on the right and the left are many thousands of angels.¹⁴⁴ The scene evokes fear in Adam causing him to worship the Lord. In LLAE 27-28 as God communicates with Adam twice more, he worships God giving him praise and prostrates himself to the ground. The message received by Adam is in stark contrast to the usual commissioning of the prophet, for him it is the death sentence (LLAE 26:2).¹⁴⁵

7. Testament of Levi.

The Testament of Levi¹⁴⁶ is part of the larger work known as the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. The debate concerning this work's origin and nature is still largely unresolved.¹⁴⁷ The main positions are that it is either a Jewish work¹⁴⁸ with Christian interpolations or it is a Christian composition that used traditional Jewish material.¹⁴⁹ For this study it will be taken as a Christian document that has reworked various Jewish sources.¹⁵⁰

TLevi 2:3-5:7 records Levi's first vision which includes a heavenly journey. The 'spirit of understanding of the Lord'¹⁵¹ came upon Levi. Under this influence he witnessed and grieved for human sin, and prayed for his deliverance. He is then overcome by sleep, and finds himself on a high mountain.¹⁵² From his elevated vantage point he saw the heavens were opened which is the cue for communication from above, and so he heard the angel of God's command to enter.

In chapter two, after navigating the first three heavens, of which little descriptive detail is given, Levi is informed that there are four subsequent heavens which are 'more brilliant and incomparable.' He is also told that he will be a priest of the Lord¹⁵³ and in this role he will disclose the Lord's mysteries and herald his coming redeemer.

In chapter three he is given a description of the seven heavens. The first three heavens are depicted in greater detail than is given in TLevi 2:6-8. The first heaven is the gloomiest, the second has fire, snow and ice, while the third houses heavenly beings of judgment. The remaining four holy heavens are listed in descending order (i.e., 7>6>5>4). The seventh heaven

¹⁴¹ Cf. 2Kgs. 2:11; Ezek. 1:15-18; 10:9-11; Dan. 7:9; 1En. 14:18.

¹⁴² Cf. 1Kgs. 22:19; Isa. 6:1; Exod. 24:9.

¹⁴³ Cf. Ezek. 1:27.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. 1 Kgs. 22:19; Dan. 7:10.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Gen. 3:6.

¹⁴⁶ Aramaic fragments of a Testament of Levi have been found at Qumran caves 1 and 4 and also from the Cairo Geniza. However it is not at all clear what the exact relationship of these fragments is to the Greek text of Levi. In fact, as far as I am aware, they have no parallel to this particular passage of TLevi. See most recently Kugler (1996).

¹⁴⁷ For a comprehensive study of the history of this debate, see Slingerland (1977). He concludes 'that a quest for the origins of the Testaments in some form of early Christianity is not only possible and justified, but also compelled by the nature of the document, by modern critical developments, and by the many-faceted character of Christian religions in its early forms' [pg. 113].

¹⁴⁸ For this position see Kee *OTP1* (1983) pp. 775-828.

¹⁴⁹ De Jonge holds strongly to this view. See, most recently de Jonge (1991) pp. 147-63.

¹⁵⁰ This would follow Kraft's (1994) methodological approach when he suggests that it is preferable to begin with the default position that a given text was produced by Christians until it is established otherwise by positive evidence.

¹⁵¹ The translation used is that of Hollander (1985), unless otherwise stated. In Sparks (1984) the translation closely follows de Jonge (1978). However in Kee *OTP1* (1983) the translation shows more differences because of the approach to, and the handling of, the underlying Greek text. The major consequence, in the passage of interest to us, is the amount of heavens the original vision included. So in the main text of Kee it is limited to three heavens, while in de Jonge and Sparks, they number seven.

¹⁵² Cf. Exod. 24:9; Ezek. Trag. 68; ApAbr. 17:3; 1En. 17:2; 2Bar. 13:1.

¹⁵³ In TLevi. 4:2 Levi is described as being a 'son and a servant and a minister of his presence'. Then in TLevi 8 he receives a second vision when he is clothed in his priestly garments and is given the regalia of that office.

is the abode of only the 'Great Glory in the holy of holies far beyond all holiness'¹⁵⁴ (TLevi 3:4). The emphasis here is on the transcendence of God, portraying total separation. The remaining three heavens contain various types of angelic beings. In the sixth there are the 'angels of the presence of the Lord' who minister and offer sacrifices to God. In the fifth heaven there are angels who act as messengers to the angels of the presence of the Lord. In the fourth heaven there are two categories of angels, thrones and authorities,¹⁵⁵ who offer ceaseless praises.

In chapter 5 an angel opened the gates of heaven and Levi received the climax of his vision - seeing 'the holy temple and the Most High upon a throne of glory'.

8. 2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch.

This Jewish¹⁵⁶ apocalypse dates most probably from the first century prior to the fall of the temple.¹⁵⁷ It has survived in a long and a short recension. It is extant only in Old Church Slavonic. His ascent - which begins with two angels appearing to Enoch as he lies on his bed in a distressed state (2En. 1:1-3) - incorporates a journey through six heavens (2En. 1-20). He receives a vision of God in the seventh (or tenth)¹⁵⁸ heaven (2En. 20-35). Enoch is then allowed to return to the world for thirty days to give instruction to his offspring (2En. 36-63). Then after a section of exhortation, he is taken up again to heaven (2En. 64-68).

During his ascent of the lower heavens there is an extensive description of their contents, however for our purpose the most significant location is the throne-room, the seventh heaven. He is transported there by two men.¹⁵⁹ Here he sees an exceptionally bright light and various heavenly beings including: the fiery armies of the great archangels, the incorporeal forces, the dominions, the origins, the authorities, the cherubim, the seraphim, the many-eyed thrones, the regiments, and the shining *otanim* stations. Enoch's reaction is one of absolute terror.

However he is encouraged by the two men to be brave. With this reassurance, he is shown the LORD from a distance, sitting on his exceedingly high throne. The ten divisions of heavenly beings, already mentioned, came and stood on ten steps according to their particular rank.

Then, after paying homage to the LORD, they returned to their places with joyful song.

In 1En 21:1 the angels have left Enoch on the edge of the seventh heaven. From here he sees the heavenly attendants who serve God unceasingly - the cherubim, seraphim, the six-winged and many-eyed who cover the entire throne. The air is filled with gentle strains of the Trisagion. Now Enoch is left alone at the edge of the seventh heaven as the two men finally leave him.

This causes his terror to return. This time it is the archangel Gabriel who encourages him and transports him 'like a leaf carried up by the wind' through the eighth and ninth heaven to the tenth. Here he sees the face of God. However the description is abstract and he questions how he can give an account of the incomprehensible being of the LORD and his indescribable face. For the third time Enoch is encouraged not to be frightened - this time it is by the LORD himself.

Then, as he stands in God's presence, his earthly garments are removed, he is anointed with 'delightful oil', after which he is clothed in garments of glory. His transformation is now complete: he has become like one of the glorious ones - there was no observable difference.¹⁶⁰ Finally Enoch is presented with a book and pen by the archangel Vrevoil, so he can record all his marvellous experiences in heaven.

¹⁵⁴ This may well be a kind of collective term for angels.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. 2En. 20:1; Asclsa. 7:15,21,27; 8:8; 11:25; Col. 1:16; Eph. 1:21.

¹⁵⁶ Oesterley (1907) pg. 38; Anderson *OTP* pg. 97; Stone (1982) pg. 135.

¹⁵⁷ So Charles (1913) II [pg. 426] because of the writer's preoccupation with sacrifices. Most modern scholars concur.

¹⁵⁸ 2 En. [J] 20:3 (also 22:1) refers to the 10th heaven.

¹⁵⁹ Gruenwald (1980) [pg. 51] notes that this is a similar idea to the 2 angels who carry the Merkavah mystic when he passes from one palace to the next (cf. *Hek. Merk.* xvii).

¹⁶⁰ See Himmelfarb (1993) pp. 40-41 for a section on transformation by investiture.

C. Dead Sea Scrolls.

1. 4QBerakhot^a 4Q286.

Five copies of the text 4QBerakhot have been discovered in Cave 4 at Qumran. They have been classified as 4QBer^{a-c} (4Q286-290). These manuscripts had been written by various scribes, however all of them have been dated to the early first century AD¹⁶¹ (ca. 1-50 AD.). The subject matter of 4QBerakhot is liturgical in nature, consisting of a series of blessings and curses.

When 4QBerakhot is juxtaposed with another text found at Qumran, 1QS 1:16-2:25, there appear to be similarities in the content and in the liturgical and ceremonial function of these two texts. Therefore it has been proposed that 4QBerakhot is another version of the annual ceremony of the renewal of the community's covenant.¹⁶² B. Nitzan¹⁶³ gives support to this proposal and sees it as a later edition and concludes that 'while the text of 1QS 2:3-17 is very close to its biblical origins, the text of 4QBerakhot is freely and poetically formulated.'¹⁶⁴

The dominant theme of the text of 4QBerakhot is that of blessings directed towards God. This is the characteristic focus of the text which is of interest to our studies - 4QBerakhot^a (4Q286 Frag.1 Col. 2). It is a liturgy of blessing to God that is addressed directly to God using the second person singular. Thus this is a hymn which, in its praise of God, refers to the throne scene, but this passage is not an actual throne vision.

B. Nitzan¹⁶⁵ divides the part of the hymn that has survived into three sections: (a) visions of the heavenly abode and thrones (lines 1-3), (b) divine attributes (lines 4-8a), (c) the mysteries of God's knowledge (line 8c-11). The passage does not divulge too much detail of the contents or description of the heavenly scene. However there are a few aspects on which we can concentrate.

The first section opens with four closely related complementary phrases. These are: (a) 'seat of your glory' [מושב יקרוך] (b) 'footstool¹⁶⁶ of your honour' [הדומי רגלי כבודך] (c) '[h]eights of your standing place' [ב[מ]רומי עומדך] (d) 'treas[ur]e place of your holiness' [קודשך קודשך]. There are perhaps echoes here of the 'pavement of sapphire' [לכנת הספיר] in Exodus 24:9.¹⁶⁷

In line 2 God's glorious chariots¹⁶⁸ [מרכבות כבודך] are associated with three attendant groups: (a) 'their cherubim' [כרוביהם] - no insight is given of their description or function¹⁶⁹ (b) 'their wheels' (ophanim) [אופניהם] (c) 'all [their] councils' [כול סודי[הם]].¹⁷⁰

In line 3 there is the dual concept of fire and light where there is a description of '[foun]dations of fire and flames of light, and flashes of splendor, ri[ver]s of flames and wondrous lightnings' [מסדי אש ושביבי נגה וחורי הוד נה[ור]י אורים ומאורי פלא]. This is a notion which is extremely common in many throne-vision scenes. Here, fire is both static and mobile and the light is also constant and intermittent.

The second section (lines 4-8b) is primarily a list of God's divine attributes. Some of these characteristics (majesty, splendour, loftiness, holiness, brightness, beauty and wonder) denote

¹⁶¹ Milik (1972) pg. 135. He also suggests that they were originally composed in the third quarter of the second century BC.

¹⁶² Milik (1972) pp. 135-136.

¹⁶³ Nitzan (1994) pp. 53-71.

¹⁶⁴ ibid. pg. 71.

¹⁶⁵ ibid. pg. 63.

¹⁶⁶ Nitzan (1994) suggests we must read the plural here. However Vermes (1997) [pp. 378-379] & Wise (1996) [pp. 286-289] translates it in the singular.

¹⁶⁷ See also Ezekiel 1:26 & 10:1.

¹⁶⁸ It could be translated also 'chariots of God's glory'. The plural [מרכבות] is used in Isaiah 66:15. This form is also used frequently in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and in later Jewish mystical literature.

¹⁶⁹ This is translated as 'multitude' in Gracia Martínez (1994); Wise (1996); Vermes (1997).

¹⁷⁰ Gracia Martínez (1994) translates it as 'secrets'.

the transcendence of God, while other characteristics (grace, understanding, loving-kindness, and mercy) point to God's immanence. There is no explicit reference to God as Creator within this hymn. However in line 5c-6a there is mention of his 'awesome deeds and healin[g] and miraculous works' [נוראות ורפואות] [ת] ומועשי פלאים].

There is also in the third section (8c-11) which deals with the mysteries of God's knowledge, the notion of God's control over time. There are phrases such as 'in their fixed order' [בזכותמה], 'times ordained for' [בזמנאות], and 'appointed times of' [מזמנאות].¹⁷¹ So perhaps with the idea of God's command over the physical and temporal realms there comes the implication that he is also the Creator.

2. Second Ezekiel (or Pseudo-Ezekiel) 4Q385.

The passage that we are interested in, 4Q385 *Fragment* 4, lines 5-14, is found in the larger work designated as Second Ezekiel or (Pseudo-Ezekiel) 4Q385-391.¹⁷² This larger collection refers to various visions that were revealed to the prophet Ezekiel:¹⁷³ the desolate land of Israel (4Q386 1 ii 1-3); the future temple (4Q391 65); the valley of the dry bones (4Q385 2) and the throne vision of Ezekiel 1 and 10 (4Q385 4).

Second-Ezekiel 4Q385 fragment 4 is reckoned to date from the late Hasmonaean or early Herodian period¹⁷⁴ (i.e. approximately the mid-1st century BC.). It is written in Hebrew, in a narrative style in the third person singular, and it contains nothing which is overtly sectarian. It is not an exegetical work but rather it is a retelling and summarising of the biblical account with a few changes. The essence of the section found in lines 5-14 is an abridged version of the vision in Ezekiel 1¹⁷⁵ (also with some influence from Ezekiel 10)¹⁷⁶ that is similar in form, vocabulary and style.

In line 6 the first detail referred to is 'a brightness of a chariot' [נהמרכבה]. Strictly speaking canonical Ezekiel does not mention the *merkabah* but rather the brightness emanates from a 'great cloud' [ענן גדול], and the 'throne' [כסא], as such, is not alluded to until almost the climax of the vision in Ezekiel 1:26. The next topic to be broached is that of the four living creatures [ארבע חיות] which are the main subject matter of this part of Second Ezekiel which has survived. They are described (line 7) as walking on two legs [על שתי תלך החיה האחת]. This is not explicitly recorded in canonical Ezekiel, but they are described as 'in the likeness of a man' [דמות אדם] in Ezekiel 1:5. The faces of the living creatures, described as being connected together,¹⁷⁷ are, in order, those of a lion [ארי], an eagle [נשר], a calf [עגל], and a man [אדם] (line 9).¹⁷⁸ Closely associated with the living creatures are the wheels [אופנים] (lines 10-11). Here they are described as 'wheel being joined to wheel' [אופן חובר אל אופן] while in Ezekiel 1:16 and 10:10 'the wheel [is] within a wheel' [האופן בתוך האופן]. This idea of attachment [חובר] is used in Ezekiel 1:9-11, not to describe the condition of the wheels, but rather the wings of the living creatures.

¹⁷¹ This section illustrates the special Qumran concern for the calendar as ordained by God.

¹⁷² In recent years there has been discussion as to the actual extent of this work. Originally, J. Strugnell viewed it as a single writing with various copies. More recently, Dimant [(1992) pp. 405-448; (1992A) pg. 49] who has now taken over responsibility for this material, has revised this classification by concluding that there are three separate works - Pseudo-Ezekiel, Pseudo-Moses and Apocryphal Jeremiah. Her revisions are yet to be universally accepted, however for our purposes, the identification of 4Q385 remains unchanged.

¹⁷³ The canonical book of Ezekiel appears to have had quite a prominent position in the community at Qumran. For reviews of this topic, see Brooke (1992) pp. 317-377 & Dimant (1992A) pp. 31-51.

¹⁷⁴ Strugnell (1989) pg. 45.

¹⁷⁵ It is not simply a summary of Ezekiel's vision, but rather the author has introduced some small alterations and additions. See Dimant (1990) pp. 345-6.

¹⁷⁶ See Brooks (1992) [pg. 323-324] for a clear example.

¹⁷⁷ This detail is supplementary to the prophet Ezekiel's vision. It is a notion difficult to visualise unless it refers to some kind of yoke arrangement.

¹⁷⁸ The type and order found in canonical Ezekiel are different. So in Ezekiel 1:10 = man, lion, ox, & eagle, and in Ezekiel 10: 14 = cherub, man, lion, & eagle.

In contrast to 'the coals' [גחלים] in line 12 which house living creatures 'like coals of fire' [כגחלי אש],¹⁷⁹ there is above this scene, a structure of 'awesome ice' [הקרה הנורא].¹⁸⁰ From the vicinity of this structure comes a 'voice' or a 'sound' [קול].¹⁸¹ Unfortunately we neither know to whom the voice belongs nor what was said because the ending of fragment 4 has been lost.

3. Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice 4Q400-407.

The history of the edition of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice is one of scholarly teamwork,¹⁸² including the labours of J. Strugnell, A. S. van der Woude, Y. Yadin, and H. Stegemann, and culminating in C. Newsom's critical edition¹⁸³ which includes all the known texts of the Sabbath Songs from Cave 4 (4Q400 - 4Q407), the manuscript from Cave 11 and the fragment found at Masada. Although there is no internal evidence pointing to their age, it has been determined by palaeographical means that they date from the first century B.C. These documents record thirteen songs which correspond to the Sabbaths of the first quarter of the year according to the solar calendar used by the community at Qumran. There continues to be a debate as to their origin - whether their derivation is qumranic,¹⁸⁴ or if, in their basic form, their roots could be found in older traditions.¹⁸⁵ The Sabbath Songs are liturgical compositions which depict the angelic priesthood and their worship (or various activities) in the celestial temple which is described in detail. The songs transmit angelic praises to God.¹⁸⁶ There is an undeniable mystical¹⁸⁷ and nebulous ambience to the work.

There are two main passages¹⁸⁸ which are concerned with the merkabah. Firstly the song which is numerically central,¹⁸⁹ the song of the seventh Sabbath (4Q403 1 ii 1-17), and secondly, the twelfth song (4Q405 20-21-22 ii 6-14)¹⁹⁰ which is towards the close of the entire composition.

¹⁷⁹ There is no allusion to fiery beings in Ezekiel chapter 1 or 10. However 1En. 14:11 refers to 'fiery cherubim'.

¹⁸⁰ Cf Ezekiel 1:22.

¹⁸¹ Cf Ezekiel 1:25.

¹⁸² For a detailed summary of the history of the edition, see Newsom (1990) pp. 101-102.

¹⁸³ Firstly, Newsom (1985) and most recently, Charlesworth-Newsom (1999).

¹⁸⁴ Newsom (1985) [pg. 4] states, 'the scroll of the Sabbath Shirot is a product of the Qumran community'; also Dimant (1992A) [pp. 40-41] asserts 'this work is thoroughly impregnated by the terminology and ideas of the Qumran community, and therefore must have been composed by one of its members.'

¹⁸⁵ See Maier (1992) pp. 542-560, & Newsom (1990A) pp. 167-187.

¹⁸⁶ Allison (1988) [pp. 189-197] has pointed out that although there are many references to praise being offered to God, not once is there record of the content of this praise. This is a remarkable fact when it is considered that in other ancient Jewish and Christian writings the angelic hymns are often prominent features of heavenly scenes. He concludes that silence can be a vehicle of praise, and that the author of the Sabbath Songs was following tradition when he portrays his angels and cherubim for all practical purposes mute.

¹⁸⁷ Newsom (1985) [pg. 59] uses the term "quasi-mystical," while Baumgarten (1988) [pg. 201] suggests 'it represents an early form of congregational mysticism.'

¹⁸⁸ Both of these passages are much influenced by Ezekiel's visions in Ezekiel 1 and 10.

¹⁸⁹ Newsom (1990) [pg. 102] envisages a pyramidal structure with the seventh song at its apex. However Baumgarten (1988) [pp. 119-213] suggests that Newsom has not attached enough importance to the procession to a climax of the 13th Song. So 'the song for the 9th Sabbath brings the worshiper into the "royal vestibules"; in the 10th he approaches the marvelous veil; in the 11th he views the figures on the brick pedestal of the throne; in the 12th the Merkabah is described, leading finally to the 13th to the climax of the burnt offering.' [pp. 206-7]. Also Dimant (1992) [pp. 41, nt. 40] writes, 'The general ideological character of the first six songs, as distinct from the descriptive, visual nature of the last six - picturing progress into the heavenly temple, until the final climax with the cultic ceremony taking place in the innermost part of the temple - points to a rather different structure, in which the final songs form the climax. This subject, however, needs further study.'

¹⁹⁰ This is the section of the 12th Song which we are interested in here. Later parts of the song are found in two other fragments - 11QShirShabb 5-6, and 4Q405 23 i.

a. Song for the Seventh Sabbath (4Q403 1 ii 1-17).

This song can be divided into two sections. The first section (4Q403 1 i 30-46) describes an extended call to the seven angelic councils to praise God. The culmination of this summons is that the whole temple structure erupts into praise. The focus of the second section (4Q403 1 ii 1-16) is the throne of God. It is introduced with a reference to 'his footstool' [הדום רגליו],¹⁹¹ and its accompanying 'perfect light' [אורחות] and 'mingled colours' [רוקמת] (although the word usually refers to variegated colour in fabrics and stonework, perhaps there is here an echo of the rainbow in Ezekiel 1:29). The theme of light continues in line 5 with the 'flashing of lightning' [לכת ברק] and the mobile 'coals of [fire]' [נחלי אש]¹⁹² in line 6 (cf. Ezekiel 1:13; 10:2). In line 13 there is the concept of the inanimate becoming animated, the architecture bursts into praise.¹⁹³ The chariots [מרכבות]¹⁹⁴ in line 15 continue this theme as they offer praise along with their associated cherubim and ophanim.

b. Song for the Twelfth Sabbath (4Q405 20-21-22 ii 6-14).

The previous song, Song Eleven,¹⁹⁵ closes by mentioning again these multiple chariots¹⁹⁶ and the attendant cherubim and ophanim. This leads to Song Twelve¹⁹⁷ which once more focuses on the divine throne scene. It gives us more details about the cherubim and also the throne itself. Firstly the cherubim prostrate themselves before God [יפולו לפניו] and bless him [וברכו] (line 7). Then as they rise the movement of their wings also contribute to God's praise [ברום כנפיהם קול דממת אלוהים] (line 8).¹⁹⁸ They also bless the image of the chariot throne [חבנית כסא מרכבה מברכי] (line 8) which is above them, and sing of the splendour of the luminous firmament¹⁹⁹ beneath his glorious seat [והוד רקיע האור ירננו ממתחת מושב כבוד] (line 9) from a position below it (cf. Ezek. 1:22-26).²⁰⁰

Secondly we have more information about the chariot throne. Its mobility is represented by the reference to moving wheels [בלכת האופנים] (line 9), and its 'glorious hubs' [גלגלי כבוד] (line 10).²⁰¹ As the throne advances, holy angels [מלאכי קודש] move around it and 'the appearance of streams of fire'²⁰² like hashmal [מראי שבולי אש בדמות חשמל] (line 10)²⁰³ issue from it. Around the throne there is a 'radiant substance with glorious colours, wondrously hued, purely blended' [נוגה ברוקמת כבוד צבעי פלא ממולח טוה] (line 10-11). This description is reminiscent of Ezekiel 1:27-28 which expresses the visible glory of the figure on the throne.

¹⁹¹ See comments made on reference in 4QBerakhot.

¹⁹² The image of fire occurs again in line 9 with 'shapes of flaming fire' [בדני להבת אש].

¹⁹³ 'all the crafted furnishings of the debir hasten (to join) with wondrous psalms' [כול מחשבי הדביר בתהלי פלא] Cf. also 4Q405 19 and 23i. See also ApPaul 44 where the altar, veil, and throne rejoice in the presence of God.

¹⁹⁴ As mentioned earlier in our discussion of 4QBer., the notion of the plurality of thrones is found, almost exclusively and frequently, in later Merkavah literature (see e.g. Ma'aseh Merkabah 6). However in the AscIsa. 7, Isaiah sees in each level of the heavens from one to five, a throne. It is also, significantly, found in Dan. 7:9 which may be the source.

¹⁹⁵ Portions of the middle and conclusion of this song are preserved in 4Q405 19ABCD & 4Q405 20-21-22 ii 1-5.

¹⁹⁶ These multiple chariots are referred to again towards the end of Song 12. They are described as glorious and wondrous, and are associated with 'the spirits of godlike beings'. However Newsom (1985) [pg. 317] suggests that the plurality should be taken as a 'plurality of majesty'.

¹⁹⁷ This song was first published by Strugnell (1960) pp. 318-345.

¹⁹⁸ The sound of their wings in Ezek. 1:26 is described as like the roar of rushing waters, like the voice of the Almighty, and like the tumult of an army. Newsom (1985) [pg. 314] notes that the sound produced by the movement of the cherubim and their wings was understood in Jewish tradition as a sound of blessing and adoration. See, for example the targum to Ezekiel 1:24-25.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Exod. 24:10 and Ezek. 1:22.

²⁰⁰ In lines 11-13 'the spirits of living godlike beings' [רוחות אלוהים חיים] seem to have many of the characteristics of the cherubim.

²⁰¹ There are many echoes of Ezek. 1:12-14 in lines 9 & 10.

²⁰² Although Ezekiel's vision refers frequently to fire, there is no mention of 'streams of fire'. This is a later development. See Dan. 7:10 & 1En. 14:19.

²⁰³ Newsom (1985) [pg 316] states "although the exact significance of חשמל later became the subject of esoteric speculation, in the Shirot, as in Ezekiel, the word simply refers to the bright, shining quality of the glory of God. In 3 Enoch 36:2 the ministering angels cover themselves with cloaks of 'Hashmal'".

A few points of interest should be noted in conclusion.

These three passages - 4QBerakhot^a 4Q286, Second Ezekiel (or Pseudo-Ezekiel) 4Q385, and the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice 4Q400-407 - were influenced mainly by the canonical book of Ezekiel.²⁰⁴ None is actually a throne-vision *per se* (there is no concept of ecstatic trance or ascent to heaven), but rather, two of them are liturgical works (4QBerakhot and the Sabbath Songs) and the third (Second Ezekiel) is a reworked summary of Ezekiel's visions.

C. Newsom²⁰⁵ notes that Sabbath Songs 'do not associate the merkabah with a scene of revelatory disclosure. Instead the merkabah is presented as the central cult object of the heavenly temple'. Second Ezekiel follows closely to the canonical vision, unlike other ancient Jewish and Christian works where their application gives way to vivid imagination.²⁰⁶ The Sabbath Songs are an important milestone in the development of Jewish esotericism and the insight into their perception of the heavenly sphere. We find the concept of multiple thrones [מרכבות], which is prominent in later Jewish mysticism, in 4QBerakhot and the Sabbath Songs. In the latter they have developed into animate vehicles of praise. There are many references to praise within the Sabbath Songs but there is no record of the actual contents of this praise. This is surprising because hymns were an important component of throne visions.²⁰⁷ Normally the throne, or more specifically 'the One seated on the throne' is central cynosure of throne-vision scenes. However in the Sabbath Songs the focus revolves around the angelic priesthood.²⁰⁸ Finally the three passages would support the belief that the throne-vision scene, which was of great interest to apocalyptic writers, was also a major concern for the Qumranites.

D. Gnostic Writings.

1. The Apocalypse of Paul (Coptic).

The Coptic Apocalypse of Paul is a Gnostic work probably composed in the second century.²⁰⁹ In the opening verses Paul meets a little child²¹⁰ who acts as his guide to the heavenly realm. Paul is encouraged to allow his mind to awaken, and he encounters the twelve apostles who will accompany him on his heavenly journey.²¹¹ He is caught up to the third heaven by the Holy Spirit.²¹² He travels through the fourth to the sixth heavens²¹³ and on to the seventh. Here his progress is jeopardised by an old man on a resplendent throne. However after a dialogue and manifesting a sign, Paul enters the eighth heaven (the Ogdoad) where he encountered the twelve apostles. They proceed through the ninth heaven and finally into the tenth²¹⁴ where Paul greets

²⁰⁴ However there may also have been influence from Dan. 7; Isa. 6; Exod. 24; & 1En. 14, 61, 71 among others.

²⁰⁵ Newsom (1987) p. 29.

²⁰⁶ It also follows Ezekiel's vision far more closely than our other two works, Sabbath Songs and 4QBerakhot.

²⁰⁷ This is particularly true of later *Hekhalot* literature. See also, Isa. 6:3; LadJac. 2:6-22; ApAbr. 17; 1En. 39:12-13; 2En. 21:1; 3En. 1:12; 19:7; 20:2; 39:2; 40:1-2 & Rev. 4 & 5.

²⁰⁸ Newsom (1987) [pp.13] notes that, 'In a certain sense, one could even say that it is not God but the angelic priests who are the true subjects of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice.'

²⁰⁹ See Murdock (1979) pg. 49. There is no literary affinity with the Greek work of the same name, but both works are inspired by Paul's remarks about his heavenly ascent in 2Cor. 12:2-4. However the present apocalypse increases the number of heavens from three to ten in number using the third only as an introduction to the rest.

²¹⁰ Murdock (1979) [pg. 48] identifies the child as an epiphany of the risen Christ. See also *Ap. John* (BG,2) 20,19-21,4; Act. Jn. 88. In the text Paul's guide is also referred to as the (Holy) Spirit [πνευμα] e.g. *Apoc. Paul* 19:21, 26; 21:24; 22:1,11,22.

²¹¹ Throughout the narrative, sometimes the twelve apostles are escorting him, but at other times they seem to appear on the scene to greet Paul. See 19:15,16; 20:2,3; 21:29,30; 22:14,15; 24:1,2.

²¹² The mention of the Holy Spirit as the agency of ascent is an expansion of the New Testament text, as is everything which follows.

²¹³ In the 4th & 5th heavens he witnesses the judgment of souls (cf. TAbR. 10). Information on the 6th heaven is sparse. It is illuminated by great light on high and there is a toll-collector as in the 4th heaven.

²¹⁴ It is not clear whether the phrase 'we went up to the tenth heaven' (24:6,7) includes the apostles or it only refers to the occupants of the ninth heaven. It probably does embrace the apostles because they would not be out of place - they were earlier described as 'elect spirits' (19:17). In fact, perhaps because of the fluidity in their relationship on Paul's journey, the 'fellow spirits' that Paul greets in the tenth heaven are the twelve apostles.

his fellow spirits.²¹⁵ This is the consummation of his guide's pledge that Paul would 'know the hidden things in those that are visible' (19:13,14).

This ascent sequence contains the typically negatively Gnostic stance against the Jewish Creator God. The hostile demiurge sits, not the highest heaven (whatever particular number that happens to be depending on the specific literary work), but rather he languishes only in the seventh out of ten. His power is also limited as Paul's upward advancement is only temporarily impeded. However the work is characteristically syncretic as the Jewish apocalyptic influence demonstrates. There are clear echoes of Dan.7:13 and 1En. 46:1; 47:3 in the physical description of the demiurge.

2. On the Origin of the World and The Hypostatis of the Archons.²¹⁶

These two tractates incorporate Gnostic elaborations of the Genesis creation story. They are closely related and appear to depend on an unknown common source. They clearly derive from a Jewish background.²¹⁷ The section of the *On the Origin of the World* which we are interested in - the repentance of Sabaoth, the ascent and enthronement of Sabaoth, the creation of the throne chariot of Sabaoth, the creation of the angels, the instruction of Sabaoth, and the separations into right and left, [*OnOrgWld*103:32-106:19] - contains around sixty words of the *Hypostatis of Archons* account, and there is also a similar structure and sequence of events. For these reasons we will focus on *OnOrgWld* because it is the fuller and more developed account.²¹⁸

On the Origin of the World.

It is an apologetic composition providing a comprehensive collection of basic Gnostic concepts. It was probably composed at the end of the third century or the beginning of the fourth A.D. in Alexandria.²¹⁹ It is difficult to classify the work because it uses various sources including, 'Jewish thought, Manichaean motifs, Christian ideas, Greek or Hellenistic philosophical and mythological concepts, magical and astrological themes and elements of Egyptian lore.'²²⁰

After his repentance, Sabaoth, the son of Yaldabaoth, is enthroned with Sophia Zoe in the seventh heaven. He is elevated to the seventh heaven²²¹ by seven archangels who are sent by Pistis Sophia. Here Sabaoth constructs a huge and magnificent mansion that is 'seven times as great as all those that exist [in the] seven heavens'. In front of it he creates a huge throne on top of a 'four-faced chariot called "Cherubin".' It had 'eight shapes per each of the four corners, lion forms, and calf²²² forms and human forms and eagle forms.'²²³ Sabaoth then creates 'Saraphin,' 'serpentlike angels' who continually praise him, and thousands and myriads of angels who resemble the congregation in the eighth heaven.

There is then a reference to Jesus Christ - who resembles the saviour of the eighth heaven - sitting on Sabaoth's right on a revered throne, while on his left is seated the virgin of the holy spirit who glorifies him. There are also seven virgins who have thirty harps, psalteries, and trumpets who glorify him. Finally Sabaoth is presented as sitting on a throne in a cloud of light which conceals him from the angels.²²⁴

²¹⁵ There is the inference here of a transformation having taken place as Paul appears to be on an equal footing with the spirits in the 10th heaven.

²¹⁶ Doresse (1960) [pg. 163] assumes that a significant part of *The Hypostatis of the Archons* 'is manifestly an abridgement of a certain *Book of Norea*.'

²¹⁷ Fallon (1978) pg. 2.

²¹⁸ See Fallon pp. 10-24.

²¹⁹ Layton (1989A) pp. 12-13.

²²⁰ Robinson (1977) pg. 161.

²²¹ This is not the highest heaven. There is an eighth heaven above this whose content is described to Sabaoth by Pistis Sophia's daughter Zoe (Life).

²²² Robinson (1977) [pg. 166] translates the word as 'bull'.

²²³ The order here is the same as that of Rev. 4:7.

²²⁴ Cf. Ps. 104:2; Targ Job 26:9.

E. New Testament Pseudepigrapha and Later Christian Material.

1. Apocalypse of Paul (Greek).

The title 'the Apocalypse of Paul' refers to two different writings. One is the Gnostic work which was discovered at Nag Hammadi (NHC. V,2), and mentioned above, while the other is an early Christian apocalypse. This was the most influential and longest lived of the tours of hell²²⁵ and paradise. It survives in seven languages:²²⁶ Greek, Latin, Syrian, Slavonic, Old Russian, Coptic and Armenian. The 'Tarsus introduction'²²⁷ asserts that manuscript was discovered in AD. 388,²²⁸ and most scholars date the work from between the mid-third and early fifth centuries A.D.²²⁹ The writing of the Apocalypse of Paul has been inspired by the reference in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 to Paul being 'caught up to the third heaven' (v.2) and 'caught up into Paradise' (v.4). However the journey extends beyond that of Paradise and it also portrays graphic descriptions of hell.

The Apocalypse of Paul 11-51 is an account of the heavenly journey of Paul accompanied by an angel who serves as his interpreter and guide. In ApPaul 11 he is caught up to the third heaven where he sees the souls of the righteous and the wicked leaving their bodies at death (ApPaul 11-18). In ApPaul 19-20 he enters Paradise which is in the third heaven. Here he is welcomed by Enoch and Elijah. Next he crosses the Lake Acherusia to the city of Christ with its four rivers and central altar where David sings (ApPaul 22-30). Paul then sees the places of punishment with its rivers of fire (ApPaul 31-43). This causes him great distress. Finally, in ApPaul 44-51 he returns to Paradise.

The author of the Apocalypse of Paul has obviously been influenced by the book of Revelation. There are three main passages that display parallels with Revelation:²³⁰

(a) A section in ApPaul 14 reads 'And after that I heard the voices of a thousand times a thousand angels and archangels and the cherubim and the twenty-four elders who sang hymns and glorified God and cried: Righteous art thou, O Lord, and righteous are thy judgments; there is no respect of persons with thee and thou dost requite every man according to thy judgment' - cf. Rev. 4:11; 5:11ff; 16:5-7.

(b) In ApPaul 21 there are references to 'the first earth will be dissolved and this land of promise will then be shown'; 'the Lord Jesus Christ will come with his saints'; and 'he will reign for a thousand years' - cf. Rev. 20:2; 21:1ff.

(c) The opening lines of ApPaul 44 read 'And I looked and I saw heaven move as a tree shaken by the wind. And they suddenly threw themselves on their faces before the throne; and I saw the 24 elders and the 4 beasts worshipping God, and I saw the altar and the veil and the throne, and all were rejoicing; and smoke of a good odour rose up beside the altar of the throne of God.' - cf. Rev. 4:10; 8:3ff.

²²⁵ See Himmerfarb (1983) pp. 16ff.

²²⁶ It is thought that the Apocalypse of Paul was originally composed in Greek, however the existing Greek text is only a summary of this apocryphal work. The Latin version is considered to be the best text which is closest to the original. This text was published by M. R. James *Apocrypha Anecdota* (1893) pp. 11-42.

²²⁷ The 'Tarsus introduction' provides a preface for the Latin version, a conclusion to the Syrian translation, and is completely absent in the Coptic version. So the originality of this section must be questioned and is probably a later addition to the primary work.

²²⁸ This is the date calculated by James (1893) from the reference in chapter 1 to 'the consulate of Theodosius Augustus the Younger and of Cynegius'.

²²⁹ 240-250 A.D. [Casey (1933) pp. 28,31]; 3rd cent. [Himmerfarb (1986) pg. 106]; 3rd-4th cent. [Charlesworth (1987) pg. 34]; 4th-5th cent. [Perkins (1992) pg. 203; H. Duensing, *NTA* 2 (1965) pg. 756].

²³⁰ Charlesworth (1987) [pg. 35] lists other possible parallels: ApPaul 12 with Rev. 7:9 & 22:4; ApPaul 16 & 18 with Rev. 16:7 & 19:2; ApPaul 23 with Rev. 21:10-14; ApPaul 31 with Rev. 3:16.

Abbreviations.

A. Serial Publications and Reference Works.

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	D. N. Freedman, ed., <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> 6 vols New York: Doubleday, 1992
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AJSL	American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature (Chicago)
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
AOS	American Oriental Series
ARW	<i>Archiv für Religionswissenschaft</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
BI	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
BSB	<i>Biblical Studies Bulletin</i>
BW	<i>Biblical World</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur ZAW
BZNW	Beihefte zur ZNW
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series</i>
CGL	Coptic Gnostic Library
CH	<i>Church History</i>
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CrSt	<i>Cristianesimo nella Storia</i>
DBI	<i>Dictionary of Biblical Imagery</i> . eds., L. Ryken, J. C. Wilhoit, T. Longman III, Downers Grove: IVP, 1998
EC	Epworth Commentaries
EJ	Encyclopedia Judaica
EQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
ESW	Ecumenical Studies in Worship
EUS	European University Studies
ExpT	<i>Expository Times</i>
GNS	Good News Studies
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies, Durham</i>
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies

<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IBD</i>	<i>The Illustrated Bible Dictionary</i> . I-III, ed., J. D. Douglas, Downers Grove: IVP, 1980
<i>IBS</i>	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
<i>ICC</i>	International Critical Commentary
<i>ICS</i>	<i>Illinois Classical Studies</i>
<i>IDB</i>	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>IVP</i>	Inter-Varsity Press
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>JSJS</i>	Supplements to <i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSNTSS</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series</i>
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
<i>JSPSS</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTC</i>	<i>Journal for Theology and the Church</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>JU</i>	<i>Judentum und Umwelt</i>
<i>LCL</i>	The Loeb Classical Library
<i>MNTC</i>	Moffat's New Testament Commentary
<i>NCB</i>	New Century Bible
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
<i>NHMS</i>	Nag Hammadi and Manichean Studies
<i>NHS</i>	Nag Hammadi Studies
<i>NICNT</i>	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIGTC</i>	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NovTSup</i>	Supplements to <i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NRT</i>	<i>La nouvelle revue théologique</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>NTT</i>	New Testament Theology
<i>OTL</i>	Old Testament Library
<i>OTP</i>	J. H. Charlesworth, ed., <i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . 2 vols (London: Darton, Logman, & Todd, 1983, 1985).
<i>OTS</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
<i>PVTG</i>	<i>Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graeca</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>REAug</i>	<i>Revue des études augustinennes</i>
<i>RechSR</i>	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
<i>REJ</i>	<i>Revue des Études Juives</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Revue and Expositor</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>RHPR</i>	<i>Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Revue des sciences religieuses</i>
<i>RTP</i>	<i>Revue de théologie et de philosophie</i>
<i>SBLDS</i>	Society of Biblical Literature, Dissertation Series
<i>SBLEJL</i>	Society of Biblical Literature. Early Judaism and its Literature

SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature. Monograph Series
SBLSBS	Society of Biblical Literature. Sources for Biblical Study
SBLSCSS	Society of Biblical Literature. Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature. Seminar Papers
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SBTS	Sources for Biblical and Theological Study
<i>Sem</i>	<i>Semeia</i>
SIG	W. Dittenberger (ed.) <i>Sylloge Inscritionum Graecarum</i> 3 rd ed., 4 vols
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJSJ	Supplements to the <i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i> (Edinburgh)
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies. Monograph Series
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Study. Monograph Series
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
StNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testament
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
<i>TBA</i>	<i>Tübinger Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft</i>
TBC	Torch Bible Commentary
TDNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich eds., <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , 10 vols. (tr. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976)
<i>Them</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
<i>Theol</i>	<i>Theology</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>TR</i>	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
<i>TWNT</i>	<i>Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> . eds., G. Kittel and G. Friedrich
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
YJS	Yale Judaica Series
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZBK</i>	<i>Zürcher Biblekommentar</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

B. Old Testament and Apocrypha.

Old Testament

Azar	Azariah
1Chron	1 Chronicles
2Chron	2 Chronicles
Dan	Daniel
Deut	Deuteronomy
Eccl	Ecclesiastes
Est	Esther

Exod	Exodus
Ezek	Ezekiel
Gen	Genesis
Hab	Habakkuk
Hag	Haggai
Hos	Hosea
Isa	Isaiah
Jdt	Judith
Jer	Jeremiah
Josh	Joshua
Judg	Judges
1Kgs	1 Kings
2Kgs	2 Kings
Lam	Lamentations
Lev	Leviticus
1Macc	1 Maccabees
2Macc	2 Maccabees
3Macc	3 Maccabees
4Macc	4 Maccabees
Mal	Malachi
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Neh	Nehemiah
Num	Numbers
Obad	Obadiah
Prov	Proverbs
Ps, Pss	Psalms
1Sam	1 Samuel
2Sam	2 Samuel
Sir	Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus)
SoS	Song of Solomon
Tob	Tobit
Wisd	Wisdom of Solomon
Zech	Zechariah
Zeph	Zephaniah

C. New Testament.

Col	Colossians
1Cor	1 Corinthians
2Cor	2 Corinthians
Eph	Ephesians
Gal	Galatians
Heb	Hebrews
Jas	James
Jn	John
Lk	Luke
Mat	Matthew
Mk	Mark
1Pet	1 Peter
2Pet	2 Peter
Phil	Philippians
Rev	Revelation
Rom	Romans
1Thes	1 Thessalonians
2Thes	2 Thessalonians
1Tim	1 Timothy
2Tim	2 Timothy

D. Abbreviations for Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature.

Acts Jn	Acts of John
<i>Adv Haer</i>	<i>Against All Heresies</i> [Irenaeus]
ApAbr	Apocalypse of Abraham
ApEl	Apocalypse of Elijah
ApMary [6]	The Six Books of the Virgin
ApocGorg	Apocalypse of Gorgorios
<i>ApostCon</i>	<i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>
ApPaul	Apocalypse of Paul
ApPet	Apocalypse of Peter
ApSedr	Apocalypse of Sedrach
ApZeph	Apocalypse of Zephaniah
ApZos	Apocalypse of Zosimus
AscIsa	Ascension of Isaiah
<i>b. Ber</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud tractate Berakot</i>
<i>b. Hag</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud tractate Hagigah</i>
<i>b. Shab</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud tractate Shabbat</i>
2Bar	Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch
3Bar	Greek/Slavonic Apocalypse of Baruch
1Clem	First Clement
1En	First Enoch
2En	Second Enoch
3En	Third Enoch
EncJnBapt	Encomium on Saint John the Baptist, by Saint John Chrysostom
Ep Apost	Epistula Apostolorum
EpistPsTitus	Epistle of Pseudo-Titus
<i>Exod. R.</i>	<i>Midrash Rabbah on Exodus</i>
EzekTrag	Ezekiel the Tragedian
Fal Pray	Falasha Prayers
GBart	Gospel of Bartholomew = The Book of the Resurrection
GedMos	Gedulat Moshe
<i>Gen. R.</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i> = <i>Bere'sit Rabbah</i> . [<i>Midrash Rabbah on Genesis</i>]
GLAE	Greek Life of Adam and Eve
Gos Mary	Gospel of Mary
GPet	Gospel of Peter
GrApEzra	Greek Apocalypse of Ezra
Jos Ant	Josephus <i>The Jewish Antiquities</i>
Jos J.W.	Josephus <i>The Jewish War</i>
JosAs	Joseph and Aseneth
Jub	Jubilees
HebApEl	Hebrew Apocalypse of Elijah
HebVis	Hebrew Vision
<i>Hek Rab.</i>	<i>Hekhalot Rabbati</i>
<i>Hek Zut.</i>	<i>Hekhalot Zutarti</i>
HistRech	History of the Rechabites
LadJac	Ladder of Jacob.
LivPro	Lives of the Prophets
LLAE	Latin Vita Adae et Evae
<i>Ma'aseh Merk</i>	<i>Ma'aseh Merkavah</i>
<i>Merk. Rab</i>	<i>Mekavah Rabbah</i>
MystJn	Mysteries of John the Apostle and Holy Virgin
Philo Mos	Philo <i>De vita Mosis</i>
PsSol	Psalms of Solomon
PrJac	Prayer of Jacob

QuEzra	Questions of Ezra
SibOr	Sibylline Oracles
TAbr (A, B)	Testament of Abraham. (Recensions A and B).
TAdam	Testament of Adam
Tg Onq	Targum Onqelos
Tg Ps-Jon	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
TIsaac	Testament of Isaac
TJac	Testament of Jacob
TJob	Testament of Job
TLevi	Testament of Levi
TMos	Testament of Moses
TZeb	Testament of Zebulun

E. Gnostic and Nag Hammadi Literature.

<i>Ap Jas</i>	<i>Apocryphon of James</i>
<i>Ap John</i>	<i>Apocryphon of John</i>
<i>IApoc Jas</i>	<i>First Apocalypse of James</i>
<i>Apoc Paul</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Paul</i>
<i>Apoc Pet</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Peter</i>
<i>Asclepius</i>	<i>Asclepius 21-29</i>
<i>Auth. Teach</i>	<i>Authoritative Teaching</i>
<i>Cod. Bruce Untitled</i>	<i>Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex</i>
<i>CH</i>	<i>Corpus Hermeticum</i>
<i>Disc 8-9</i>	<i>Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth</i>
<i>Exc Theo</i>	<i>Excerpts from Theodotus [Excerpta ex Theodoto] of Clement</i>
<i>Exeg Soul</i>	<i>Exegesis on the Soul</i>
<i>Gos Eg.</i>	<i>Gospel of the Egyptians</i>
<i>Gos Thom</i>	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>
<i>Gos Truth</i>	<i>Gospel of Truth</i>
<i>Hyp Arch</i>	<i>Hypostasis of the Archons</i>
<i>Melch.</i>	<i>Melchizedek</i>
<i>OnOrgWld</i>	<i>On the Origin of the World</i>
<i>Paraph. Shem</i>	<i>Paraphrase of Shem</i>
<i>Plato Rep</i>	<i>Plato, Republic 588b-589b</i>
<i>Pr. Thanks</i>	<i>Prayer of Thanksgiving</i>
<i>Sent. Sextus</i>	<i>Sentences of Sextus</i>
<i>Steles Seth</i>	<i>Three Steles of Seth</i>
<i>Teach Silv</i>	<i>Teachings of Silvas</i>
<i>Thom Cont</i>	<i>Book of Thomas the Contender</i>
<i>Tri Trac</i>	<i>Tripartite Tractate</i>
<i>Trim Prot</i>	<i>Trimorphic Protennoia</i>
<i>Zost</i>	<i>Zostrinos</i>

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